

"THE CHURCH—INSTITUTION OR DESTITUTION"

A current problem as viewed
through the eyes of a
young minister.

BY

TENNYSON GUYER

"Whenever God erects a house of prayer
The devil always builds a chapel there;
And 'twill be found, upon examination,
The latter has the largest congregation."

DANIEL DEFOE



Tennyson Guyer

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DEDICATED

To a man to whom I am indebted for a noble legacy. A true victor of the faith, who lived and loved the Christian life—my father—the late Dr. William Harris Guyer.

T. G.

“THE AUTHOR - IN PORTRAITURE”

By

DR. HOMER ROSS DUNATHAN

(President of Findlay College, Progressive present-day Educator)

TENNYSON GUYER, whose book you are about to read, represents the newer generation of young men in the Christian pulpit. Not too long ago, he was born on the campus of our institution, where his late father was then the president. His boyhood and college years evidenced just what we find so definitely a reality now. Here is a man who not only wanted to get things done, but wanted to get them done with the minimum loss of time. A brilliant student, a delightful personality, and a storehouse of unlimited energies have brought Reverend Guyer rapidly to the forefront among his fellow workers.

In addition to his work in the ministry, Guyer has busied himself as a social worker and has had considerable experience as a youth supervisor under the National Youth Administration.

Reverend Guyer, in this present treatise, has evidenced his native enthusiasm along spiritual lines. The problem he attacks, needs to be frankly attacked; frankly, but with a full degree of optimism. The reader will gain a great deal of satisfaction from studying this volume.

“THE CHURCH”

By

BARTON REES POGUE

(Inimitable Hoosier Poet, Author, Humorist, and Radio Personality)

What does the church mean to you,
This House providing an altar of prayer
Where worship is wont to be made, and where
The spirit needs of life may be met?
They builded this shrine for the good of the place,
Believing in God, and the Gift of His grace.
What does the church mean to you?

What do you mean to the church?
What kind of work would your church do
If the roll of her members were all like you,
Who fail to support and attend her rites?
Be a helper, and by helping share
In graces and gifts beyond compare!
What do you mean to the church?

*(The above poem was expressly contributed by Mr. Pogue
for exclusive use in this volume.)*

“THE LOST TRAVELER”

IT IS an extremely dark night. From the eerie shadows a ragged man emerges to make his way towards the gleam of light that suddenly brings hope to his despairing heart. The stranger nearly collapses as he knocks on the door of the little hut from which the light had shone. From within, the door is at length reluctantly opened by a grumbling old man with shaggy eyebrows. The exhausted man, lying prostrate at his feet, looked up and sobbed, “I’m lost! Can you help me?” With a rage of disgust, the old man barked back, “Well, you’re still lost,” and slammed the door.

This was not the first door to be slammed in his face, for the stranger had suffered much indeed. He had wandered in vain over the earth. In Russia he was expelled, in Germany he was threatened, in America he was ignored. And so the weary traveler still lies in the dust. He hovers between unconsciousness and death; he is thirsty, tired, and hungry. He is a lost traveler. He is THE CHURCH.

This lost traveler was not always a poor beggar, trudging from nation to nation. At one time he stood in fine apparel. He was fairly worshipped. People looked through his eyes to see God. They used his home for a place to renew their strength. Empires took him into their palaces and erected cathedrals in his name. Little children learned to love his house. Weary pilgrims silently came to pray and meditate. His admirers grew and his forces became strong. People even listened to his opinions on government and social justice. He became a power wherever he went. When pioneers pushed their way into virgin soil, they took him along, and when the smoke of gun-battles with lawlessness had cleared

In one of His few salient acts of positive assailment, Christ went to the temple and purged it of the money-changers and dove-sellers, overturning their tables, and pouring on their heads the most vitriolic invectives they had yet heard.

Then for a week He taught in Jerusalem, drawing crowds wherever He went. It was then, that Judas, a disappointed Messianist, divorced himself from the cause. Judas, who had envisioned himself as the Secretary of the Treasury of the Master's forces after the overthrow of Rome, began to realize that Jesus never intended to summon His Father's angels for purposes of aggression, nor did He plan to expunge the yoke of Rome. As this unhappy thought affirmed itself, Judas sought an exit that brought eternal shame to his name, and the title of "The World's Most Dastard Traitor."

Thus the cleavage widened, and in its wake, the enemy within the gates plotted with the enemy outside, the result was the betrayal and arrest of Jesus.

The reader is well familiar with the events of that travesty of a trial, the perverse antipathy of an aroused mob, the clamor for an innocent preacher's death, and the pitiful finis that forever crimsoned the pages of history.

And so the Master met the end alone, betrayed by one, denied by another, and abandoned by all but a handful of desolated watchers. Towards the end of a long day of aching pain and burning thirst, the solitary leader bravely faced the throes of approaching death. With the placidity of submissive resignation, He left His spirit in the hands of God, softly saying, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Great darkness fell upon the earth and the veil of the temple was rent in twain. The disciples and other believers crept back into the shelter of their shadowed corners, lest they too taste a similar fate. It was a sad day for them, and seemed to be the death-blow to their faith as well as their leader. The world was little concerned over those three crosses in the red twilight evening, and as darkness de-

scended over the hill, the distant city set about its preparations for the Passover. Scarcely anyone but the vestige of mourners on the way to their homes troubled to see whether Jesus was still dying or already dead.

I always like to pardon John for his absence from that scene which followed, for I like to believe that because of his deeply sensitive nature, the awful mask of death on his Savior's face, was more than he could look upon. While Jesus expressed little concern over the fate of his body, two silent figures with cloaks wrapped tightly about them, stepped strangely into the picture. These two friends, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, came upon the scene when the frightened disciples made no appearance to help. Together they came to care for the mortal remains of their friend. Passing by the two thieves whose bodies lay in awful horror in a near-by ditch, they tenderly carried away the still form of the Son of God, and gave Him respectable burial in a new tomb. And thus, the curtain dropped on the life of this revolutionist whom the world thought was forever out of its sight.

And then, like a bombshell, the impossible happened! The Man of Miracles performed His greatest miracle after He was dead. It couldn't be, but it was! Jesus had come back from the dead!

At first the news came in a whisper. The shrinking disciples threw off their fear of discovery and came out again into the open. They consoled themselves with a new conviction. The last words of the Master regarding the reconstruction of the temple were finally understood. Jesus had conquered the grave! With renewed hope they rallied their forces, others joined, many saw and spoke with Jesus again, they became His witnesses, they circulated the story with unbounded joy, and they took on new strength never before witnessed by the world. At last Christianity had been

launched, and nothing could now halt the march of these soldiers of the cross.

In a brief while there came to the scene the greatest single man of God since Christ—the apostle Paul. His anti-Christian hatred became inexorable fidelity, and his conversion became a world-known event in history. From that Damascus Road experience, Saul became Paul, and Paul became the world's greatest ambassador for Christ. This man threw the dynamic weight of his being on the side of his erst-while enemy. He dared preach a universal Christ. He dared throw off the shackles of Judaism. His Letter to the Galatians became the Emancipation Proclamation of the Gentiles, and his unprecedented belief in justification by grace, struck the Council of Jerusalem like a bombshell. From that conflict of convictions, Paul emerged the victor of one of the ten decisive battles for Christianity.

Much of the history of the Christians is very obscure. They multiplied far and wide throughout the world, but little is known of their ideas or methods. There were wide variations in creeds and disciplines, but whatever differences separated them from uniformity, one thing saliently stood out—they were agreed on the “spirit of Christ.”

On every hand they encountered persecution and opposition, but these barriers were sources of strength rather than weakness. Wherever bitter enmity and counter-propaganda arose, they lived above such assaults by the goodness of their lives and the power of their convictions.

In less than a hundred years after the resurrection, there were 200,000 Christians. Within three hundred years there were eight million, or nearly one-fifteenth of the population of the entire Roman Empire. The fires of persecution only burned the message of Christ deeper into their hearts. Tertullian (160-220 A. D.) wrote: “We are of yesterday, yet we have filled your empire, your cities, your towns, your islands, your tribes, your camps, castles, assemblies, and senate.”

The decisive turning point of Christianity came on October 27, 312 A. D., on the occasion of the conversion of Constantine. In the campaign of his wars with enemy forces to establish himself on the throne, he experienced an unforgettable apparition. On the eve of the battle of Milvain Bridge, near Rome, he saw in the sky a vision of the Cross, with these words above: "In This Sign Conquer." From that hour he launched his fight under the banner of Christ, and went on to win the battle.

Constantine ordered fifty Bibles for the churches of Constantinople. He further commanded two public carriages to speed them to the Emperor, and set aside Sunday as a day of rest. This latter act permitted soldiers to attend church services, and allowed a much needed cessation of labor for the slaves.

In effect, Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Empire, but it was Theodosius (378-395 A. D.) who made it so, actually. It was he who made church membership compulsory. This, historians, agree, was the WORST CALAMITY that has ever befallen the church. Up to and including the experience of Constantine, the appeal of Christ was purely one of love and invitation. But now, with this moral edict making subscription to the church mandatory, it resulted in filling the church with hosts of unregenerate people.

A far cry from this picture was the behavior of Nero who was in power in 64 A. D. when the great fire of Rome occurred. The populace had suspected Nero of this arson, so he shrewdly pointed the finger of guilt at the Christians. Because of this shunted blame, thousands met cruel death by his hand.

Compulsory church support was also in deadly contrast to the acts of Domitian who in 96 A. D. instituted persecution against those who professed Christ, charging them with atheism. This era of hate and expulsion was brief but ex-

tremely violent. Thousands were slain in Italy and in Rome proper; among them was Flavius Clemens, a cousin of the Emperor. His wife, Flavia Domitilla, was banished, as was also the apostle John.

One could cite a multiplicity of agents who fostered Christian persecution: Trajan (98-117 A. D.), Hadrian (117-138), Antonius Pius (138-161) under whose rule Polycarp was martyred; Marcus Aurelius (161-180), Maximin (235-238), Decius (249-251), Valerian (253-260), and Diocletian (284-305).

It stirs the blood to read of the unbelievable tortures these unyielding disciples endured. Despite pagan atrocities, these valiant believers rebounded with amazing courage, and their number increased with each new thrust of suppression. The dramatic episodes of their determination to worship, take us to the celebrated catacombs, those vast subterranean galleries which extended for hundreds of miles beneath the city. Here the Christians sought refuge, worshipped, and buried their dead. Christian graves have been variously estimated at between two to seven million.

Looking back at the church from the perspective of today, we now realize that as long as persecution was the order of the day, Christianity flourished, because men valued a faith that exacted a price. But with the cessation of persecution, pagan Rome gave Christianity the kiss of death, and this unholy merger brought two incompatible drops of quicksilver together.

William G. Shepherd in his powerful volume "Great Preachers," lets Rev. John Roach Straton give us the picture. Listen to Straton: "The story of Christianity changed the world once. And if it had not been sidetracked, the world would have stayed changed. We must prove to the world again, as Christ and His disciples proved to it, that there is nothing natural about Christianity, but that it is all supernatural; that it is a plan of God, not a scheme of men."

Straton continues: "Today we are trying to reach Christ through science and anthropology, and we are stretching our brains trying to apprehend Him. Christianity is far simpler than the thing we call religion today. It was its very simplicity that rocked the world. Did you ever stop to think how simple it really was, as Christ preached it, and His disciples taught it? There was no Darwinism and it had no problems of brain or science. It was all love and sacrifice. All Christ told His disciples to do was to go out into the world and tell about Him and the story of His crucifixion and resurrection. That was all. It was a perfectly simple and beautiful story."

To quote just another excerpt: "After He had gone, the world was divided into two parts. On the one side was the great Roman Empire, mistress of the earth, with its riches, unlimited power, and sin. On the other side was the tiny band of disciples. They were illiterate men from the working classes. As soon as they began to tell the simple story, men everywhere believed them, and men who believed, worked miracles. Before long the story found its way to Rome. Persecuting the Christians and killing them did not weaken the power of the story. Men who heard that story could not help but believe. Christ knew what power that story would have over men. He said, 'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Who could be surer of the power of God than He?" To Straton's version I add my affirmation.

When that simple story ceased being simple, the power that had raised men to new heights of character, disappeared. New curtains were added; new theories were spun, and the general confusion that followed, left men in a labyrinth of nebulous indecision.

We have heard much talk about the forgotten man. Some have opined that the forgotten man is the worker. Others have said he is the consumer. This latter interpretation

gives it a strange twist, since women do more of the buying than the men. But I quickly add my word: The real forgotten man is this lost traveler—the church.

This staggering traveler has pathetically lost his way. At the outset of his journey, he was strong and fired with vision. Stones on the road before him were cast aside. Barriers only accentuated enthusiasm for his journey. Enemy attacks served only to make the goal more cherished.

But now, that weary traveler has lost his way. He stumbles and falls, and his wounds are many. Even his maps are faulty, and he isn't sure of his path. Stunned, famished, ignored, and alone, he gropes for light.

"THE ENEMY WITHIN THE GATES"

By

RAYMON BURNS BAIR

(Minister of the Celina and Rockford Presbyterian Churches)

THE Church has long been aware of the enemy within its gates. One of the most ancient authors of Biblical drama recognized this fact when he said, "Now there was a day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them."

The enemy within the gates has presented himself in different ways, according to the particular age in which he appears. Under the Hebrew philosophy of life, he came with power to destroy material values; but under the Christian age he comes to destroy the finer spiritual values. The latter destruction is greater than the first.

The enemy has appeared within the gates as a power to divide. Our spiritual friendships have been frustrated; our spirit of adventure has been dulled; and our loyalties have been divided. The enemy within the gates is ourselves. We cannot blame the failures of the Kingdom work on others. We must tackle ourselves. The enemy is supported by a host of volunteer alibis. The strategy is to shift responsibility. But if victory is to be won over the enemy within, conquest must come from within.

"THE ENEMY WITHIN THE GATES"

"Well may he smell fire, whose gown burns"—Herbert

SOME months ago I chanced to read a magazine advertisement which pictured a fair young lady who had sought advice from a fortune-teller. The clairvoyant holding the lady's hand, said with searching reality, "Your worst enemy is a beautiful young blonde." What she meant was, that she herself, was her own worst enemy.

The world is replete with the stories of people who conquered most everything in sight, except their own faults. Alexander the Great was a tragic example of a young man who dominated the then-known world; but never learned to dominate a young man named Alexander. His tragic, untimely demise was the ironic finis.

The church suffers more from within than from without. Its many faults are noticed by the outsider long before they come to the attention of the institution itself.

If one cares to delve into history, he soon finds the awful truth. Catholic and Protestant alike have committed deplorable sins against the Christ they both seek to preach.

Pope Gregory the 13th called a festive holiday. What was the occasion? Merely 20,000 non-conformists were to be murdered by the Catholics. Open hostilities between the church at Rome and the insurgents had been waging since 1208 A. D. Simon De Montfort seized the city of Beziers and slaughtered all 15,000 of its inhabitants. When reminded that among that multitude there might be some righteous people, the Pope said: "Kill them all; God will be able to recognize the heretics from the faithfuls." And on marched the war of hate.

The author in no wise is indicting either Catholic or Protestant but is merely stating the facts as history passes them to us. Even John Calvin, one of the great church fathers, was not immune to this charge of intolerance. When he came to Geneva, he fell into dispute with Servetus, the brilliant Spanish doctor who had discovered the pulmonary circulation of the blood. Servetus had written a book in which he presented a different view of the Holy Trinity. Calvin took exception, protested, and became so filled with burning ire, that he had the so-called heretic burned at the stake.

Even the mighty Martin Luther, who so defiantly stood for Christ against Papal abominations, fell victim to the same degeneration. Luther had successfully revolted against Rome; but when humble peasants also revolted against intolerance and looked to him for sympathy in their crusade, he countenanced their suppression and death. Hundreds were flayed, racked, had their tongues torn out with red-hot pinchers, and suffered many other unspeakable tortures.

Time and time again the church has impeded the progress of science simply because it was too blind for greater truth, and couldn't comprehend that true science is never in disharmony with true religion.

The fate of Copernicus, who discovered that the sun and planets did not revolve about the earth; but that the earth revolved about the sun, is another example of the perverse prejudice of the church in its darker days. Bruno in Venice, dared speak in behalf of enlightened science, and his obituary was written in his own ashes as he was burned at the stake. Galileo, another pioneer of truth, was abused, imprisoned, finally went blind and wasted into emaciation, meeting his death in shameful disgrace.

The unpardonable crimes committed on our own New England shores by the very church fathers who came to

America to escape persecution, still stain the pages of history with their bloody brutality.

Yes, the church's worst enemy is the church itself—the enemy within the gates. The church can never instruct the world how to live, until it can set its own house in order. The proof of the pudding is still in the eating.

They tell us that a sailor on shore-leave, felt a penitential urge to go to church. At random he wandered into a prominent New York church, and quietly sat down. In a moment he was engaged by a meticulously attired usher who politely informed him that he was occupying a private pew. Taking another seat, he was again accosted, and duly moved a second time. After a third expulsion, the bewildered tar took his exit, and upon reaching the door, asked the usher what church it was. "This is Christ's church," was the reply. "Well, I guess He isn't here tonight," said the sailor as he made his way back to the streets; and he had a queer feeling towards the house that bore the name of the Man who said, "Whosoever will, may come."

During the evening service of a Chicago metropolitan church, the minister forcefully delivered a burning message against sin and its ravages. Back in a remote corner was a young man absorbing that message. As he felt the finger of conviction pointing at him, great tears welled in his eyes, and trickled unbidden down his cheeks. At that point an observing deacon moved towards him and said to the young man, "Are you ill? I have been noticing your discomfort." "No," sobbed the young man, "I only need prayer and pardon for my transgressions against God." "Well for heaven's sake, get out of here," was the stern reply. "We can't interrupt our service for that. You have caused enough commotion already. Go around the corner; there is a little mission there, and they'll be glad to take care of you." And with that, the gates of heaven closed on another seeking pilgrim.

Many a minister bewails the empty pew, the forgotten collection plate, and the deteriorating sanctuary, but fails to see the relationship between these signs of degeneration and the attitude of his church towards people who want spiritual bread.

Whatever contempt the church holds against the little mission and the Salvation Army, is cancelled by its own anti-Christian treatment of the people who are literally forced to go there for soul shelter. It is true that these agencies offer crumbs to those who aren't permitted to sit at the table; but even crumbs are welcome to the starving man.

The fault lies as much with the minister as with the congregation. Too many pastors cannot find room in their formal orders of worship for the sin-beset soul to ease its pain.

Many a young minister begins his life of service fired with the prospect of saving the world for Christ. But some place along the way, he loses this ambition, and turns to the task of trying to save part of his salary instead. Billy Sunday remarked that whereas Peter preached one sermon resulting in the salvation of 3,000 souls; the minister today often has to preach 3,000 sermons to save one soul.

But let us say in defense of the pastor, his job is an arduous one. A former governor once said in defending the unschooled minister: "Churches shouldn't complain about the ignorance of their ministers as long as there are congregations ignorant enough to tolerate them."

The church, if it is to survive, must reflect the spirit and atmosphere of Christ: Many churches today have an outward appearance that closely resembles a funeral home. The church is decidedly not meant to be a mausoleum, which is opened now and then to admit the dead. Christ said, "I am come that ye might have LIFE, and that ye might have it more abundantly."

Look around and see if our churches reflect LIFE. If ever you have occasion to peruse the Bible in search of one of Christ's funeral sermons, you will have a long search indeed. There just aren't any. A funeral couldn't remain a funeral when Jesus was present. He brought life wherever He went—vitalized, wholesome, throbbing life.

The quaint tenor of the practical prankster's last request is exemplary of the lassitude of many church members. This deceased left instructions in his will, that his creditors be his pallbearers. His explanation for this was, "They carried me all my life, so they might just as well carry me now." As you call the roll of our sinking churches, apply that measure. Many a church member dies at 30 even though the funeral may not be held until he is 70.

A little consideration and sense of fairness on the part of the congregation, will contribute a great deal to the making of a successful pastorate. I always feel a bit sorry for the new minister as he scans a critical congregation. There they sit—like a jury. Their arms are folded, and their jaws sag with unhappiness. They sharply eye the hapless young minister as though he were a goldfish within a bowl. That mute picture of fearful stillness seems to say, "Here we are. We are five hundred strong. If you preach a half hour, you are consuming two hundred and fifty hours of our time. You'd better make it good."

Incidentally, trial-sermonizing should never be encouraged. It can work hardships in two directions. Even if a minister is calm enough to survive the stares, and manages to deliver a good sermon, even then, his performance is neither typical nor a fair sample of his sermons by and large. Most every minister has some place in his barrel, a "pet sermon" which he can execute with acumen. Should the congregation take a fancy to this demonstration, he then has the task of making each succeeding presentation as good as this

favorite one. It may erect a disadvantageous standard to live up to.

In the other direction, a normally capable minister may not be accustomed to unfamiliar jowls and alien unreceptiveness. This smoke screen of frigidity may intimidate him and cause him much uneasiness. His sensitiveness may find a tension that renders him incapable of doing his best.

Let the congregation that must go fishing, send a delegation into the man's present church, and there let them observe his style and ability as it is exhibited week in and week out, when he is unsuspecting of visitors and unaware of strange eyes in his midst. No case worker with any experience of consequence, would go to a client's home as a Sunday dinner guest, if he desired to portray a true cross-section of the family life of the home. It is when the visitor drops in on wash-day or just "happens" to make an entrance at mealtime, that the truest scenes are gathered as to how the home is managed.

Returning to our stranded thought on the behavior of the pastor and congregation, my belief has always been that the church in some respects is similar to a tureen. In each case, the individual is expected to bring something. I once knew a woman who made a habit of gathering up the leftovers after a tureen, and always managed to take home more than she brought. What a time she would have had, had she been present at the feeding of the multitude. She would have helped to gather up the twelve baskets that were left over.

Ed Wynn, the American humorist, once remarked: "A Parasite is a fellow who goes through a revolving door on somebody else's push." Far too many so-called bona fide church members attempt the same sort of thing in the spiritual sense. They want to get to heaven on somebody else's push.

It is always interesting to analyze a church congregation. As the pastor looks over his flock, strange facts come to mind.

Over here sits a man who comes to church because of public opinion. He is afraid of what the good people will say if he stays at home. Over in another corner is a business man whose church interest is focused on the acquisition of new customers. He comes to church for the sake of new contacts that can be made and converted into cash register receipts. Again, here is a young lady who bursts forth on Sunday morning with a preview of the latest styles. To her, church is an unending Easter parade.

And then, there are those unhappy souls, who seek the shelter of the church for purely protective reasons. They are afraid to live and much more afraid to die. They aren't quite sure about their port, but they seek a haven of refuge. Church to them, is a sort of after-life-insurance policy, an anchor in case the worst happens. I always feel sorry for this latter class, because they go through life needlessly fearful and forever apprehensive of that goblin around the corner.

Church membership is an unknown quantity. Pastors whose work is visibly slipping, unconsciously pad their annual reports, and in the doing, work a hardship on their church. You have only to scrutinize the membership records of any church, to substantiate this assertion.

It is calculated that in Ohio, the average church membership roster numbers one hundred people. Even that figure is lamentable; but worse still are the qualifications which surround it. For example, the average church must concede that nearly five per cent of this figure are mythical, either dead or unaccounted for. Another ten per cent cannot be found or are so inactive as to be of little value to the church. Fifteen per cent more live elsewhere but cling to their somewhat dubious membership so their obituary won't read so hopelessly.

The reader may smile at this last statement, but to satisfy your incredulity, go to any minister in confidence, and ask

him how often he must emulate the astuteness of a Philadelphia lawyer in framing the obituary of a so-called "member in good standing" who is brought home for burial. In most cases, the name cannot be found on the record, and in cases where it does appear, it taxes the memory to call to mind the identity of the subject and what he has done for the church. Most ministers would be grateful to be relieved of such embarrassment. Even flower committees are often in a quandary as to whether to send floral tributes or not. It requires a veritable journey of circumvention to keep from telling an untruth when the final words of summation are written in memory of the deceased.

The trials and tribulations of the man in the pulpit will be dealt with more in full in a later chapter. Just now, we are still concerned about the enemy within the gates—the lame member himself.

Let me say at the outset, I will rally to the defense of the weakest member in any church, for the simple reason that only God knows to what levels he might have fallen had it not been for church influence. I will always have more respect for the fellow who crudely paddles and kicks around in the water, however unartistically, than for the critical observer who ridicules and derides; yet who, himself, is afraid to get his feet wet.

It doesn't take much sense to be a critic. Moreover in scanning over the stage of history, it is difficult to select any truly great men who qualified as critics.

I shall never forget a jarring lesson I learned back in college. I was passing amateur judgment on the style and works of a great French novelist. Even now, it seems pathetic how dogged cynical and egotistical I must have been. I poured the hot lava of literary wrath on the undeserving shoulders of a great writer who long ago had passed into the company of literature's immortals, and who wasn't there to defend his works. The professor, with calm patience and much tol-

erance, waited until I had said my all; and then with shrewd acumen said, "Well, Guyer, what all have you written?" Those terse words paralyzed my next word. What had I written? Absolutely nothing. He didn't need to add, that until I had written something better, I had best refrain from judging those who had. The lesson of that silent chastisement will forever remain with me. And today, whenever an outsider begins to rail against the church, I always feel like saying, "Well brother, perhaps what you say is true; but what have you done to improve such a condition? Why don't you jump in and make it what it ought to be?" No, I am not too eager to defend the outsider; but on the other hand, if ever we as a church are going to better ourselves, we must be willing to listen to honest criticism from without. Our enemies will tell us our faults; our friends seldom do.

Any debater knows that the best way to plan his argument, is first of all to search out all the facts against his side of the question, so as to be equipped to meet the logical opposition when it comes.

There is no evading the blunt truth—we do have weak church members. The old Chinese proverb, "No chain is any stronger than its weakest link," is equally applicable to the church. But rather than embitter those who have faults (are there any who haven't) it is far wiser to learn what they are, so as to strengthen our forces from within.

The spirit of reception and the nature of the after-service conversation has much to do with the visitor's return. Nothing will chase a back-slidden member back into inactivity quite so fast as the dropping of biting remarks at the door of the church. If a member who has been an absentee for a great while, suddenly decides to return to church, how do you suppose he feels when some well meaning sister steps up and says, "Where in the world have you been? It must have been five years since you were here last." Nothing of good can be gained from such talk. The delinquent member

knows as well as anyone when he attended church last; and above all, doesn't want to be reminded how long ago it has been. You can graciously invite a member to come again, without charging him with the indictment of being on a five-year spiritual vacation.

Coat-collaring is another evil of the church of today. No person enjoys being dragged to service. Some churches pattern their recruiting methods after the style of Hebrew clothing merchants who dash out to the sidewalk and literally tug the potential customer inside. As expressed earlier in this book, the church suffered its first degradation when coercion replaced invitation. Jesus repeatedly said, "Come unto Me." The church must never forget that this must forever be the standard of every effort to enlarge its borders.

Nor is the sin of coat-collaring limited to members alone. The minister is often the biggest offender. Many a person has been "trapped" at a service. It is unfair first of all to deceive the congregation by misrepresenting services, or springing unannounced special offerings or similar embarrassing interpolations.

Another type of collaring is the method relished by some ministers when certain people happen to be drawn to church by unusual or tragic circumstances. Many a minister has said to himself, "Ah, at last I have him where he has to listen. There he is back in the fourth row. Watch me roast him." Funerals afford picnics for such type of minister. While it is true that in some cases, serious challenging is not out of order, still and all, in times of bereavement, one need not point the dagger at an already bleeding heart, nor personalize bare facts to the point where they sting the person who needs comfort more than retribution. Such behavior is likely to be more ruinous than beneficial.

We confess that some people attend church services but once or twice out of the year. It was to this class that one

minister directed his remarks on an Easter morning: "I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, for I won't see some of you until next Easter." Even so, the pulpit should never be used as a machine-gun nest, behind which the minister hides as he fires away at some hapless fellow, who though avowedly delinquent in interest and attendance, at least has the grace to be present at the time.

Another enemy within the gates, is the tradition-bound member who feeds on the dust of antiquity. He refuses innovations, new ideas, or replacements to meet growing needs. Progress is scarcely out of harmony with Christ who said, "Thou shalt see greater things than these."

All the world believes in evolution as a dynamic force in life. I do not allude to Darwinism or familiar theories about the genesis of life. By evolution I mean growth and change. Even Christ increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man. Let anyone, young or old, compare an old personal photograph with the face he sees reflected in the mirror, and he will at once accept evolution as a fact.

The greatest bug-bear in the path of church unity today, is the unwillingness of members to relinquish their familiar habits and oftentimes bigoted customs. Just drop in at any circuit board meeting where church union is being proposed. It may be a situation in which two churches of the same denomination are situated a few miles apart. The burdens of upkeep and salaries are difficult to meet. Someone suggests that the logical move is to unite the two congregations, thereby reducing expenses, and concentrating efforts under one leader. Suddenly an unyielding oldster expresses vituperative resentment to the plan. The reasons voiced are unimportant; but the real reasons are very clear. The point plainly stated is, that the man who has been serving as elder or superintendent of the Sunday school for a good many years, grossly dislikes any thought of his having to unite

with another church body, in which he may be shelved. He cannot visualize himself giving way to another. He cannot countenance the thought of being de-emphasized. The consequence is that the plans for unity die "a bornin".

History gives us a grand lesson from the life of Catherine the Great in Russia. Observing one early Spring day, a little flower that worked its way above the ground after a long and bitter winter, Catherine was so impressed by the appearance of this harbinger of more pleasant weather, that she stationed a sentinel to guard its spot.

Nearly eighty years later, the new Czar looked out of his palace window and was puzzled at the sight of a sentinel pacing up and down, apparently guarding nothing. He inquired of the captain of the guard as to the meaning of this action. The captain didn't know, nor did even the sentry. Scrutinizing the records, the story was bared. It was the result of Catherine's whim eighty years before. The order had never been rescinded, and so, year after year, sentinels took their places guarding a spot from which a little flower had long since withered and died. Such, in a sense, is the tragic fate of the church. It stands guard over dusty traditions that long ago lost their meaning and usefulness.

Taking inventory of Christians, one also detects that they do not always possess all they profess. One of the rules of good business sense, is to attract by graphic displays. The potential buyer, walking down the street, is often arrested by the seductive shop window. The wise retailer knows that it pays to put the best of his stock where the public may eye it; otherwise, the customer may never get inside to see it.

By the same token, the church must exhibit a show window that reflects what it stands for. The word "Gospel" means "good news"; yet far too many churches translate it into leprosy. It is well to remember that we preach our most impressive sermons during the week, not on Sunday.

It was St. Francis of Assisi who asked a young monk if he desired to accompany him to town and help him preach. The youthful dominie joyfully readied himself for the privileged mission, and together they set out.

Their steps took them up and down the streets, in and out through the markets, and into the presence of many people who returned their smiles and conversation. Finally, they proceeded towards home, at which the disappointed monk could no longer restrain his feelings of frustration. "But sir, haven't you forgotten that we came to town to preach," cried the young fellow to the great man of God. Francis, that love-inspiring friend of humanity, looked sympathetically and said, "Why son, we have been preaching ever since we left our quarters. We preached as we walked and as we talked. Our every step through shop and street, preached a sermon in itself. Many eyes studied and appraised us as we strode through their midst. Remember, one never walks anywhere to preach, but what he preaches everywhere as he walks."

The modern minister and church member alike would do well to emulate St. Francis. The eyes of the world are fastened on the man in the church, and they demand harmony between precept and example. Herbert exposed a common weakness of the ministry when he wrote, "The friar preached against stealing, but had a goose in his sleeve."

We often hear someone who has come to church late, lean over and ask, "Is the sermon preached yet?" The answer to that question and every relative question is a positive NO. No sermon, however masterful, is ever preached when it falls from the lips of the speaker. It doesn't begin to even take root until it has been passed along and brightened up the hearts of other listeners.

It has been related that Alexander the Great had a soldier among his ranks who was a notorious coward. By odd

coincidence, the man's name was also Alexander, and his jeering comrades took great sport in dubbing him rather sarcastically "Alexander the Great."

When news of this reached the ears of the great empire-ruler, he called the lesser Alexander before him, and addressed him with these words: "They tell me your name happens to be the same as mine; and they also tell me that you are a miserable coward. Now young man, one of two things must be done. Either change your name or change your behavior."

This advice would perhaps be too severe for the lame church member, but it is nonetheless true that many Christians should change their ways or change their labels.

The glory of the early church evidenced itself in the willingness of its followers to be like Christ, both in words and deeds. God has but one way to help the world. He works FOR man, THROUGH man. For that reason, if we preach brotherhood, we must also show it. If we preach charity, we must practice it. There must forever be a close correlation between the tenets of the church and our actions.

Even the prayers of Christian people implace a tremendous burden on the shoulders of God. In fact, some of our weak petitions are more on the duty-escape side, than on the prayer side. How often we hear a good church member look to God and plead, "Dear Lord, please help my poor, unfortunate neighbor. His family needs food and clothing." The sentiment is commendable, but the petitioner has missed the mark. Helping the neighbor in his dire circumstance was a duty he himself could well perform. It is a good rule not to bother God about things which we can do.

Regarding harmony within the church, the outsider points with mingled glee and disgust at the feuds within our portals. Most every minister has tasted the repercussion from family hostilities. Many of these date back to disputes between grandfathers.

Unhappy indeed is the minister who decides to be a Solomon in the personal arbitration and disentanglement of such belligerencies. He may find himself invited to a parishioner's home some Sunday for dinner. Hardly are the dessert dishes cleared away, than he finds himself the silent listener to a story which would make the persecuted Jew appear as a Moslem butcher in comparison with the martyrdom this poor soul has been suffering. The neophyte minister is impressed with the hatred that some evil church member has been pouring on the shoulders of this much-wounded story-teller for thirty or forty years. The narrator looks piously innocent throughout, and finds a warm sympathizer in his new minister.

Perhaps a week or two later, the "villain" of the story also invites the minister to his home for Sunday dinner. Ah, now he hears the other side of the story. The facts are made bare in such a benign manner, that the minister's sentiment is diametrically reversed. Finally, towards the closing of the rebuttal, the speaker asks, "Now Reverend, don't you think I am justified?" The minister, not wishing to insult his host finds himself saying, "Oh, yes, undoubtedly, naturally." And with those few, fatal words, he has committed himself right into the jaws of the monster. The next time the feudists meet, each says, "Well, our new minister knows all about you, and he agreed that you are an incompatible trouble-maker."

And so, the judge becomes judged, and the two feudists return to their shells of antipathy. In a short while, the minister decides to transport his talents elsewhere, a bit wiser, and certainly more keenly aware of the pitfalls that await him. The caption that best characterizes the incident whereby the minister finds himself alienated from his first charge, might well be: "Divorced for incompatibility."

Yes, the enemy is within the gates. What are you in your church? Booster or boaster? Pillar or sleeper? Lift or weight?

Power or problem? Hero or zero? These questions properly answered may help solve that knotty problem that threatens to strangle your church.

“THE MAN IN THE PULPIT”

“I preached as never sure to preach again, As dying man to dying men.”—Richard Baxter.

THE church suffers severely today because of the men who occupy its pulpits. Fortunately church bodies everywhere are raising their standards, and within the next two or three decades, the Christian ministry should be composed of mighty men suitably equipped for this greatest of all professions.

We have intimated in earlier pages that the ministry is filled with assorted misfits. A goodly portion of the men active in the ministry at the present time, might well be applying their abilities to other fields. This is by no means a criticism of those men who were hampered in their careers by the lack of an education. Most of these men have availed themselves of every possible opportunity, until today they stand as qualified as those who leave seminary halls. I can personally name honest, capable, God-fearing ministers who had only high school educations, who received their inglorious beginnings in mining camps, on farms, and from other adverse sources. As a general rule these men of God have clothed themselves with self-learning, and have created a greater love of books than some of the so-called “gifted preachers” who have since departed from the work because they presumed upon their gifts.

While studying the destinies of precocious children in college psychology, we learned that very few ever achieved lasting reknown, simply because their gifts, like buried talents, rusted on their hands. Many who came into the world endowed with unusual traits of learning, capacity, and erudi-

tion, soon faded from the scene and were later found holding down menial jobs of labor. The same danger is prevalent among "born" preachers. Such men lose the valuable experience of heart-breaking failure. If you want a heart-to-heart revelation of the hardships of any profession, seek the man who has had to climb slowly on the ladder of bitter disappointments.

Of the eleven men selected for interview by William G. Shepherd in his stirring book "Great Preachers," it is noteworthy to point out that less than half of the men chosen attended theological seminaries. Moreover they went into the pulpit at the average age of twenty-eight years, and at the time of the writing, had served an average of thirty-two years in the pulpit.

But the fact remains, that the ministry, like every other field of labor, is studded with men whom the world knows, should have heeded another calling. Let not the reader assume that the writer is prejudiced against the election of men with limited talents to enter the ministry. On the contrary, he feels disposed to rally to the defense of any minister who has felt an experiential call to the work. There is already an overabundance of intra-ministerial criticism. As Benjamin Franklin once wisely said, "Clean your finger before you point at my spots."

But there are an alarming number of men in the pulpit who are there simply because other avenues are closed to them. They have turned to the sacred desk for want of a more lucrative outlet for their talents. Moreover, these men return with alacrity to lesser fields with the slightest signal of opportunity. Whenever you read an account in the paper of a minister who has abandoned his profession because of ill health or a throat disorder, do not be surprised if this news closely follows the inheritance of a small fortune or a transfer to another pursuit of labor.

In college, I associated with many students who were studying to be schoolteachers. When pinned to the point, they would admit the absence of any real liking for the profession. In fact, the greater share of them held little relish for the classroom, whether as pupil or teacher. Yet, from college they stream, diploma in hand, going forth to make their way in a vocation they fervently dislike. Just so, many preachers seek the pulpit, because they feel, as King Lear has put it, "necessity's sharp pinch."

Before we enter into the mechanics of preaching or the problems of the man behind the pulpit, we had best first mention that "untouchable" subject which most church members deplore hearing—MONEY.

It is unfortunate that ministers, whose greatest concern should be the promulgation of the Gospel, are obliged to wrestle with that incessant tyrant, which Ben Johnson catalogued by saying, "Whilst that for which all virtue now is sold, And almost every vice, almighty gold." If it were possible for the layman to peek inside the financial heartaches of the man in the pulpit, he would have a deeper understanding of the real suffering of the minister.

Church delegations trek to their conferences with instructions in one pocket and a price-tag in the other. Rather than evaluate the man they are sent to procure, they are pledged to bring back the ministerial bacon, irrespective of his potential worth. When a delegation searches for an \$800 pastor, they simply get an \$800 man. And there will always be men willing to serve for such amounts. As Shakespeare said in "The Taming of The Shrew," "There's small choice in rotten apples."

While the minister must be scrutinized and classified by his future employers, he in turn holds no such license to ask them for references. For reasons of desperation, hunger, and an insatiable desire to preach, the minister often must go where he is sent, like a baseball player who has been

traded to another team. This crass system of ministerial bargaining, is in reality false economy. Salary seems such a small consideration, yet it may work insurmountable misfortune. It was Herbert who once opined, "For want of a nail the shoe is lost; for want of a shoe the horse is lost; and for want of a horse the rider is lost."

Defending the minister for a moment, just what exactions are expected of him? In dress, he must appear presentably with other professional men on public occasions. Even though we choose to dismiss that trifle on the grounds that he is expected to be more frugal, what next?

One of the taken-for-granted expectancies of any minister is that he must qualify as a good pastor as well as a good pulpiteer. And to be a good pastor, he must visit. Now comes the hitch. In the old days, the circuit-rider could pull in at a farmhouse, put the horse in the barn, and stay several days, with meals thrown in. Of course there were reciprocal benefits for the host, as the minister was also a traveling newspaper. In such times, there was little to do socially, and few people could afford or even cared for the current magazines; fewer still cared for books. This was an age before the advent of Reading Guilds and Book-of-the Month Clubs. Since communication and transportation were slow, it was always a treat for the minister to spend a couple of days with the parishioner, and be a sort of "Information Please" bureau. He could keep them informed on politics, business conditions, and world affairs, as well as furnish pleasant conversation and congenial company. It must be remembered, that while the thought of saving was not up-
permost in the mind of the minister, such hospitality did save him money.

But time marches on, and today the minister must have a car. Even student pastors must commute by automobile. To the minister, the automobile, which was yesterday's luxury, becomes today's necessity. The phone rings, and he

then is looked upon by his own people as an object of charity.

If there is one thing in the world a minister doesn't want, it is charity. True, in some communities many doctors and merchants make ministerial deductions, but even at best, it makes the minister feel inferior to other people. His children are taunted by their playmates. The minister doesn't work for the love of money. He merely regards it as a necessary means to an end. Life must be sustained. The laborer surely is worthy of his hire.

What about money? Some people call it good, others call it bad. Some say it is a blessing; others brand it a curse. Is money so different from people? Is it a blessing when it goes to church and a curse when it goes elsewhere? I hardly think so. If a man is good on Sunday and bad during the week, you call him bad. Money in the same sense, cannot be bad during the week and good on Sunday. If money is a bad influence, preachers ought to be the best people on earth, because they don't have the "bad influence" with them so long.

I believe God intended for money to be good. Money can make a lot of trips and do a great deal of good that we, by occupation and circumstance, can never realize.

It has been said that the average minister's salary is \$800 a year. Do you know how much that is? It means that if there are two hundred and ten members in a church, their minister costs each one approximately the price of a stick of gum per day. Is any minister worth less than a penny a day to any parishioner?

The story of the darky preacher explains the minister's plight better than I can. In a small Southern church, the preacher had been exhorting in fiery tones, and climaxed his message with the flaming cry, "Salvation am free!" A short time later, they passed the collection plates for the offering. At this juncture, one of the less timid brethren arose and addressed the minister, "Brudda, you'all said dat salvation

am free. How come now you is takin' dis here offering?" The aroused preacher was equal to the occasion. Assuming a grave countenance, he replied, "Brudda, salvation AM free, and so am water; but you'all have to pay to have it piped to yuh."

Let not the reader construe this chapter to mean that the minister is opposed to the demands made on him and his time. Nor does it mean that he is prone to rebel because these things must be done. If the minister cannot tolerate a few obligations of duty, he has no business in the Christian ministry. But the larger truth of the matter is, that the underpaid pastor doesn't want the job lessened; he only wants the means increased so that he is better able to perform greater service. Surely the Kingdom of Heaven is worth it.

If your watch needs repairing, you pay without protest whatever the jeweler happens to charge. If your car is damaged, you eventually pay the toll. If your body needs medical attention or the skill of surgical care, you gladly mortgage your dearest possession to meet the obligation. But when the soul, the most priceless of all that you claim your own, is sore beset and becomes engulfed with perils of sorrow and distress, it is regarded so lightly that doubt is registered as to whether its salvation is worth the meager offering you are asked to give. Surely, somewhere along the line, the world needs to alter its scale of values.

I have somewhere read of a poor Illinois preacher who had discouragingly served a small pastorate for over forty years. One day his escape from that thankless congregation came in the form of a call to be chaplain at the state penitentiary. Accordingly, for appearance sake, the village held a farewell party. A few very blunt and visibly insincere expressions of tribute were offered, at the culmination of which the abject preacher was called upon for remarks. He made a pathetic picture as he stood before them, attired in

a threadbare homespun suit, red bandana handkerchief draping out of the hip pocket, and with genuine tears in his eyes. Wiping his eyes, he began: "Brethren, for forty years I have served this community, and those years have been lean, long, and uneventful ones. You never seemed to love each other much, for I married but three couples of you in all that time. I don't think you love God any too much for He hasn't called many of you Home. I'm sure you don't love me, for all I've ever received from you was a few hundred dollars a year, a few catfish and spoiled fruit, and by their fruits ye shall know them. I've been called to be chaplain at the state penitentiary; where I go, ye cannot come, but I go to prepare a place for you."

With the sad echo of the poor preacher's parting message ringing in our ears, we move along from the thought of finance to the more salient concern of the man himself as he stands in the pulpit.

We must concede that a man's first pastorate is a sort of experimental station which may either make or break the minister. It is no easy task to loom before hundreds of critical eyes, and rise enough above the piercing looks and tongue-in-the-cheek attitudes, to bring your message to the gates of the heart and drive it home with unthwarted power.

The reception and conduct of the congregation is a powerful moulding factor in the shaping of the preacher. The congregation should understand that in preaching there are no "tips" or short cuts to excellence. Each minister begins in a wilderness of indirection and must work out his own salvation. In many fields, resourcefulness and presence of mind, coupled with tricks and sleights, often help spell success. But in the pastoral field, a man cannot long live by his wits. If he tries, it is soon all over for him. What we term pulpit technique cannot be gained by patterning after the ministry's immortals. Every minister, as every man, is a separate and unique entity of individuality. He must develop his

own style; his vocal inflections must be natural; his stance and mannerisms cannot be aped, but must be cultivated in keeping with his own personality. There is no elevator to preaching mastery; you must use the stairs.

For the sake of the man, the congregation should bear in mind that the young minister is as plastic and mouldable as a young child. If he brings to the pulpit habits that are ostensibly injurious to the work, a little missionary work in the shape of advice by close friends or one of the elders, will go a long way in helping the man avoid future pitfalls. Many a man has jangled the nerves of his listeners by impediments of speech or unforgivable mannerisms; but as many more have emerged victorious by the timely help of understanding friends, who tactfully knew how to bring the awful truth to their attention without causing wounds.

A minister is made by soul travail. And the polished product may not come in a month or a year. Often a minister must even be made to feel ashamed. The Stoics were not too far wrong when they said that shame was the basis of all virtues. Dr. John Hutton adds: "We might say that shame is the occasion of all the graces."

Da Vinci's great masterpiece "The Last Supper" is known throughout the world. It is also interesting to note that the superstition of bad luck accompanying the spilling of salt, comes from this picture, in that Judas knocked over the saltshaker with his arm. Since the infamous betrayer met so tragic an end, folks have come to associate bad luck with subsequent salt-spilling. However, this is purely an aside. The point we want to note concerns itself with the Face of Our Lord in the center of the picture. The engaging story relates how all the other faces were painted on the fresco, with a place left vacant for the countenance of Jesus until the last. What the world probably never knew was that for years, Da Vinci labored to portray that celestial Face. It was only after infinite patience that God one day sent the flame

which crystallized in the formation of that Divine Portrait.

May I urge the church member to be patient and tolerant of the man in the pulpit. One day God will send that flame, and with it a powerful message. Many a man is instantly defeated by the repulsion of the hearers. The complaint reaches us that a certain minister is tedious to listen to, that he makes one nervous and ill at ease. Before we comment too much on that indictment, it is only fair to ask, "How do you listen to him?" I don't care how great the speaker is, if you only listen NOW and THEN, you soon tire of the monotony.

Going to sleep is one of the meanest problems that challenges the church. Ministers regard this amusing pastime in different veins according to their own temperaments. I have seen ministers ragingly aroused at the sight of a benign soul who perhaps in his slumber is spending the week-end at the ocean or hunting pheasants. Many a minister has paused in his message and directed biting words to the sleeper. I hardly advocate this method of combat. One minister remarked to me on that subject, "I always like to see folks nap when I speak; it shows they have confidence in me." But Spurgeon's answer to a young minister who complained of his people's lethargy, was this: "The preacher is there to keep them awake."

My father employed a unique manner which no doubt many ministers use to rouse them that "sleepeth". He used to lower his voice almost to a whisper, until even those who were fully awake, had to lean a bit forward and sometimes cup their ears. Somehow, the very silence, or at least change in volume of sound, seemed to have a more awakening reaction on the sleepers than a tap on the shoulder. Of course, if the lowered tone didn't do the trick, there was always the thunder of crescendo left as last resort. The unfortunate feature of the effect of sleepers on the church, is the possible ill-feeling that often results after a personalized reprimand

from the pulpit. Any breach in the sermon which necessitates digression or rudely interrupts the line of thought, is always a knife in the back of the message, which bleeds it of its finest punch.

However, in the congregation's defense, it is in order to warn the minister against the use of implements which induce that tired feeling. For myself, I dislike hearing the speaker say, "Now, there are five points I want to note. In the first place, etc." In other words, the listener waits in agonized impatience for one, two, three, four, and five, suspecting that even after the fifth waiting station, there will probably be a few, "Now in closings," or "I have talked too long already."

Following this line of advice, it is never judicious to apologize for unpreparedness, or as we say in debate, practice "begging of the question." If you aren't prepared you have no business appearing before a congregation; moreover, they'll find it out without your telling them. A good rule to follow in preaching, is an old one: Have something to say; say it; sit down.

It is also never wise for the minister to insult the intelligence of his audience. Whenever a minister pronounces a word and then adds, "Or as you would pronounce it . . .," the listener is disgusted, and rightly so. I have come to know that the average minister, including myself, is by no means an authority on pronunciation. Add to that fact, the certainty that within every congregation are individuals who are posted and who are students of speech, and you readily see what little license the minister has in reminding a body of listeners of its stupidity.

Another subject of much interest, is the subject of speaking notes. No doubt the layman is less concerned than the minister, but both figure in the outcome of their use. The first sermon I ever preached was delivered before a congregation which I would call above the average. Therefore I

carefully wrote out verbatim my entire sermon. I rehearsed and memorized, until I could quote it from any given point. I guess it was modestly well received, but I soon learned that the memorization plan was definitely not my plan of future preaching. The man who memorizes suffers the same handicap as a stenographer who is taking dictation. In her case, she scribbles the symbol with no thought to the meaning of the message. The minister who memorizes will one day grope for a peg or a cue, upon which all that follows is dependent. Ordinarily, in casual conversation, he could call to mind a half dozen words which would serve the same purpose; but in memorizing, that one exact word must come, or nothing else will either.

We must not condemn the composition of complete sermons in writing, for by that method, the body of the message can well be borne in mind; but the minister should think on his feet as well as try to recall what he wants to say. If the heart of the message is deeply impressed on his mind, the rest of the ramifications will fall in line. There is another advantage to the verbatim preparation method, and that lies in the usefulness of future reference. Many times, a man picks up his skeleton outline from which he preached four or five years ago, and to save his soul he cannot recollect a single illustration or body-thought which he had in mind at the time of the first delivery.

From the listener's standpoint, the excessive use of mental crutches grows weary. As I heard one church member say, "The sermon wouldn't have been so bad, but he couldn't even read well." There are men who have mastered the art of reading sermons; but the greater number only bungle when they try it. The worst feature of this dependence, is the uncertainty of circumstances, which may totally eliminate the possibility of using notes of any kind.

I was delivering a sermon one evening in a small country church when suddenly the old-fashioned kerosene lights

grew dim and nearly went completely out. My eyes are about as sharp as anyone's, but it would have been impossible to read even "large-capped" words. As it was, I had the gist of my message on the heart, and endured the experience with little misfortune.

I recall hearing my minister brother once tell of a similar experience he sustained. It was a warm summer evening, and with the windows generously raised, a playful breeze sneaked in and carried his manuscript off the pulpit to the floor on the other side of the rostrum. Naturally all eyes were fastened on him, and as is usual, everyone wondered how badly he needed the notes, and whether he would pause from his remarks and go to retrieve them. As it was, he continued without their use as though nothing at all had happened.

Your writer even had the experience of arriving at church one evening, only to discover he had left his Bible in the home of a sick parishioner on whom he had called, to read a few passages of Scripture in the afternoon. Undaunted, he went to the pulpit Bible, reconciled to the task of preaching without notes which were in his stranded Bible, and began to seek out his text. The climax came when he discovered that even his text and the page on which it appeared were missing from the pulpit Bible. With about two minutes to go, he sought another text, and preached his same sermon, although without benefit of any notes or sermon aids.

Again the author had the experience of giving an address before a group of young people's classes who had assembled for a pre-Christmas banquet. He had jotted down a few notes on a card, but was suddenly brought to realize he might as well be holding a menu, for the lights were extinguished, and only candles afforded the remaining light, which of course precluded any reading whatsoever.

One could go on, and extenuate the points which obviate the carefulness of ministerial technique, but since this book

is written as much for the layman as the pastor, we will pass along to more mutual points of interest.

Repeating what was inferred at the outset, the listener helps make the sermon as well as the sermonizer. In all of the history of Scotland few ministers preached sermons embracing even a pinch of the salt of immortality, and yet, Scottish preaching will forever be classed as inspiring. The simple explanation lay in the fidelity of the listener to the preacher. When congregations fail to bring inspiration, they often bring perspiration. Sometimes it takes the minister a full ten minutes to adjust himself to the audience, when it persists on being disinterested and unreceptive. Of course there are occasions when the congregation is justified. We call to mind the speaker who patiently tried to out-lung his audience, only to hear the distracting murmur increase in volume. At length he came to a halt in his speech, and said, "I'm sorry, but there is so much noise and disturbance I can't hear a word I'm saying." A voice at the rear of the hall bellowed out in return, "Well, you aren't missing a thing."

The great matter of subjects for sermons lies as much in the hands of the community as in the hands of the preacher. If your pastor proceeds Sunday after Sunday preaching sermons dealing with events which appeared in Saturday's paper, or falling back on the ever-reliable dictators, it is nobody's fault but the people's themselves. Once in awhile the minister will solicit suggestions for sermons, but when he doesn't, it isn't at all out of order for the elder or old stand-by to bring some to his attention. Too often the minister asks a question which nobody is asking, and then proceeds to give an answer which nobody cares about. Sermons should be such that in fifteen or twenty years, their flavor will still give zest to the hearer and still shed light for his journey through life.

The much quoted anecdote about the late President Coolidge best explains the nature of the sermon. Coolidge, who was noted for his terseness, came home from church one day, and as usual, was in no talkative mood. Mrs. Coolidge asked what he thought of the sermon. "All right," was the curt answer. "And what did the minister preach about?" continued his wife. "Sin," was the reply. "Well, what did he have to say about it," questioned Mrs. Coolidge. "He's against it," was the final word, and with that, the conversation was ended.

Any minister will do well to preach against sin, for as long as there are people left in the world, there will be sin to harass them. Clifford Hollifield, the Gospel Temple preacher from Ft. Wayne, said to me one day when we were on the way to the cemetery after holding a funeral service together, "Sin is a little word, but it has big consequences. If you examine it closely enough, you will find that SIN has an 'I' right in the middle of it. It is the duty of every person in the world to keep that 'I' out of sin." And we might add, that as long as sin is in the world, preachers will never be out of a job.

Some ministers create sensationalism for themselves by making a fetish of railing against fashions and fads. I have found that the sensational minister is not always the most salvational. The church was not intended to operate on a system of Kleig lights or billboards. You can always draw a crowd by announcing a balloon ascension or a prize-fight, but it is not the duty of the church to pattern the methods of prize fighters and movie stars. We have enough to do, in preaching the Word. The preacher who constantly denounces passing fads, habits of dress, amusements, and the like, soon finds that his popularity vanishes as rapidly as the last form of amusement. It is too much a case of straining at gnats and swallowing camels. The minister has too many weightier things to preach about. Jesus was the master sermonizer.

When you pause to consider this Man who lived in an age when there were no radios, no newspapers, and remember that He was one of the few great men of time who never wrote a book, you begin to appreciate the power of His message. Remember also that He lived at a time when slavery was at its worst, and women were held in bondage, both literally and figuratively. Yet Jesus struck His grandest blow to these curses, not by denouncing the government that fostered them but by changing the hearts of people in the hope that one day these transformed people would rally against those evils. And Jesus was right.

Jesus knew that if the message was strong enough, and powerful enough to change people, the habits would automatically be changed. Lincoln and Garrison proved that He was right in His plan to wipe out slavery, without actually ear-marking it, or cutting short His own career by arousing the antipathy of the Roman government.

Many young men today begin their pastoral careers by pussyfooting and feeling their way as they go. They have been told that certain potent members of the church react viciously if certain touchy subjects are mentioned. Now I do not advocate the willful incurring of this sort of wrath, but I do say to that pastor, PREACH THE WORD! If some of the chips fall in the path of these sensitive growlers, all I can say to the preacher is, be true to your conscience and to your convictions. If a man will take care of his conscience, God will take care of him.

There is nothing more absurd in all Protestantism than the nursing of these ouchy folks who will threaten to withdraw their support if certain sermons are preached, or if specified favors are not forthcoming. The Kingdom of Heaven is too big for such small people. Many a young man has been hampered in his work by the prospect of Mr. Bigwig's leaving the church. Without passing judgment on these individuals, we can at least question their faith. How deep

is their faith in God if they threaten to pull away from His church at the slightest provocation? This eyesore has been the fly in the ointment of our churches everywhere. Do you think the Kingdom of Heaven will be paralyzed simply because a handful of individuals withdraw their doubtful support? Too many of the ministers burn out prematurely because of excessive worry over their jobs. Worry is only interest paid on trouble before it comes due. Let the minister preach the unsearchable riches of Christ in a straightforward manner, generously sprinkled with common sense, and he'll always have a job.

A final word to the minister. Be the man in your community that you would expect Christ to be if He were preaching in your pulpit. One of the primary qualifications for the minister, is that he must love people. If people bore you or depress you, I'm afraid you have followed the wrong calling. Why do you think the little children came unto Christ? Simply because He was the type of man who invited love. For that same reason people of all creeds and classes of faith came to him for help. Christ had a personality of attraction. Some ministers today would require a stethoscope to find their hearts. Old faithful John, the beloved disciple, who was privileged to die a natural death, used to attend the church at Ephesus. Long after he was unable to walk to church, friendly arms would carry him there. His feeble message was always the same, "Little children, love one another, for that was your Master's greatest commandment." Little wonder we call him John the Beloved.

There is no excuse for ministers of different denominations, who serve different churches, to behave like little children. How can you expect your congregation to shed the great light of the brotherhood of man, if you won't put it into practice in your own relationships? Times will arise when convictions have to be asserted, but always remember

we have more in common than we have at variance. There is no need either to steal sheep, when there are already so many to be fed. Let us return again to that vast crowd—the congregation. From these latter pages, it is hoped that you will see in your minister, qualities to which you have been heretofore blinded. Look at him again. Place yourself in his place. Follow him through the laborious tasks of his pastorate. And as you sit in church to receive his message, let your mind be open and your heart impressionable. He has much good to share.

I recall that glib-tongued woman who always waited for the choir to sing, and then started conversation with her neighbor in the pew. She thought like a great many other folks, that the music drowned out her talk to the extent that others wouldn't notice. The pastor tolerated this week after week, until at last he struck on a plan. He made pre-arrangements with the choir leader for the coming Sunday. Accordingly, the choir arose and began its anthem, and immediately the voluble woman also began. Just as the choir was in the midst of its most hearty Hallelujah, the director gave the cue, and the choir stopped dead, right in the middle of the anthem. And there was the talkative one, hand at the mouth, veritably shouting out, "I fry mine in lard!"

Ah, yes, we need spirited cooperation between both pastor and people. Remember, friend reader, the pastor's job is one of the most thankless in the world. He has to be as accessible as the doctor and at a fraction of the salary. He cannot afford to offend, and must be a Santa Claus to the community. His duties are too numerous to mention. He is called upon to do everything from the settling of family differences to the keeping of the neighbor's baby. He may be called out in the middle of the night to rush to the sickbed, or he may be asked to write a paper for the lady down the street to read at the Social Circle. He may be requested to pray with a forlorn soul who has been cast out by one and

all; or he may be assigned the job of conducting the funeral of an unbeliever who was shot breaking into a store. His library, his car, his time and talents belong to the public; and the occasions upon which he is asked to "say a few words" are legion. Yes, this man called the minister, is indeed a man among men, and beyond it all, he must struggle to hold his head up to the level of other men in more lucrative fields. The pastor is everybody's friend, God's ambassador to the poor and oppressed. He holds in his hand the balm of Gilead with which to bind up the broken-hearted. His prayers are sometimes the only avenues by which forgotten people reach God. Remember well the man in the pulpit.

“SPIRITUAL ALIBYING”

By

DR. LESLIE D. VESEY

(*Pastor, St. Paul's M. E. Church, Celina, Ohio.*)

IF A church has one-third of its membership present for a given service, Sunday by Sunday, it is maintaining a very good average, in this day in which we live. The excuses that the other two-thirds make are as usually illegitimate. They say, “I was up late the night before,” or “My business kept me on Sunday morning,” or “We were expecting company,” or “The weather was inclement.”

He who habitually excuses himself from attending the services of the church, is usually insincere. People invariably do what they want to do. Nothing short of a real emergency will keep them from it. They will go to this or that in spite of the worst weather or even though their business schedule is a rigid one. People do what they are most interested in doing.

Rather than giving an excuse, if they are sincere, they should say, “Well, I really am not interested;” or “I have more important business on Sunday morning,” either of which is not an excuse but a reason. However, they will not usually answer in this way, because down deep in their hearts they know that worship is a fundamentally important thing, and the world cannot do without that which the church has to offer.

"SPIRITUAL ALIBYING"

"Who is so deaf as he that will not hear?"—Herbert

EARLY in my ministry I came to know a man whom I frequently thereafter invited to church. He was a man in the sixties, and could dream up more alibis than a tardy school child. It was amusing to listen to his excuses. I was taught early in life by one of my grade schoolteachers, that there was a chasm of difference between an excuse and a reason. Notwithstanding, this old gentleman always had a stock of excuses ready to defend his non-attendance at church. He would blame it on the arrival of unexpected company, or his wife's health, or his old faithful rheumatism, and so on ad infinitum. But the thing that punctured his alibying, was his own behavior in that connection.

I don't believe I ever met a man who could recover from so many infirmities so quickly. Monday's explanation of how rheumatism had kept him home from services, was hardly in harmony with Sunday's behavior. The malady that kept him from church didn't seem to have a prohibitive effect on Sunday's schedule. At the very moment when church was in progress, this delinquent fellow would be sitting along the damp bank of the river, feet hanging nearly into the water, and for hours he would give angleworms swimming lessons on the end of a line. The peculiar irony of his case was, that one day he did come to church. But on that occasion he was carried in. I preached the funeral sermon.

Those who remember the heyday of America's gangster era, will recall a certain racketeer who was very deft with a machine-gun, and who was the trigger man in the annihila-

tion of many underworld characters. When it seemed that the law had him encased in a web of conviction, he always managed to wiggle out by the aid of his faithful girl friend. This paramour would appear in court and testify that they were in some hotel room together at the time of the crime, and would produce a room register from the hotel to prove it. So often did her brazen defense of this killer save him from the death chamber, that the press and underworld alike dubbed her, "The Blonde Alibi."

"But God is not mocked, and whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The day came when sin had a payday. Sin is a strange paymaster. It pays promptly, in full, and in kind. The grim end of the road for this murderer came suddenly one day with gory finality. His crumpled body was found in a pool of blood, the curtains having been drawn by his own intimates. His blonde alibi was far away. No alibi, no testimony, no intervention could save him now.

Certainly every minister who has ever listened to a spiritual alibi, calls to mind the verse found in Luke 14:18—"And they all with one consent began to make excuse." As one reads the passage embracing that verse, he soon analyzes the flimsiness of the alibis offered.

The story itself is a parable in which various guests have been invited to attend a great feast. But one by one, the guests decline with apologetic excuses. The first says, "I have bought a piece of ground and must needs go and see it." Either he was an infamous liar or a very poor bargainer. What sort of business man would purchase a property without having first seen it?

The second evader says, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to prove them." I wonder what the average farmer would think of that marketing wisdom. The consumer scarcely buys a toy for his child without first seeing it work. No, I'm afraid this alibi is mighty weak.

And finally the third excuser, bows himself out of the picture by saying, "I have married a wife, therefore I cannot come." It hardly seems that God's plan for salvation of mankind should exclude woman or even cause her existence to handicap her husband. A wife is not a very plausible release from spiritual duties.

The pathos of any alibi is its own hollow sound. Surely people can scarcely expect their listeners to believe something which they themselves quite obviously do not believe. As Emerson well said, "What you are rings so loudly in my ears, I can't hear what you say." By the same token, what the alibi-artist has done already, rings so loudly in our ears, we can neither hear nor believe what he tries to say.

Listen intently to the next excuse you hear; analyze it; watch the expression on the face of the teller; and see if it doesn't crash through its own weak foundation.

One wonders how people can manufacture alibis with such ease and such little effort. But it seems people are forever offering excuses and are quite experienced in their production. Go to the files of any schoolteacher or traffic cop, and you will be greeted by a stock and store of alibis that will positively amaze you. If only such imagination and human invention could be put to some good use, there would be greater works of fiction than we now have on hand.

It is not for humorous reasons that the author includes this chapter on spiritual alibying. Beyond the levity there is a deeper consideration. Excuses afford a blanket of pardon to thousands of people from useful service. Behind this smoke screen, they shrink from the paths of duty.

When the component parts of any organization cease to function as a cooperative unit, the organization must suffer. Moreover, of all bodies, the church is the most woefully handicapped. One must ever bear in mind that the very nature of the church precludes it from resorting to means of enforcement which other organizations may employ.

If a child of school age absents himself from school, his truancy can be dealt with by an officer who has state law back of him. If a worker refuses to cooperate or balks at a task, there are many whiphands to be used, the most effective being the deprivation of his job. Even in the home, the incorrigible child can be reprimanded and punished by the parent. But in the church, what recourse or punitive force can be employed without defeating the church's own purpose? The minister does not only suffer the humiliation of being left stranded, but may receive a verbal lashing himself. If his units of help go on a sit-down strike, about the only thing he can do is to move on to new pastures. Many a minister has felt the urge to charge his people with non-support. Of course there would be no redress for him, as the church is its own judge and jury. Whenever the machinery of a church completely breaks down, the minister had best search for new fields, and pray that his successor may be more fortunate. Many a minister has left a work broken-hearted because of some personal malice which finally developed into whole organization opposition. The minister is constantly in remembrance that his every entreaty must be characterized by "Will you?" and "Won't You?" and "Come" and so on. He can never say "You Must!" Any hint of coercion kills his program. The kingdom of heaven is forever a matter of volition. Consequently, if his invitations and pleadings for service, fail to impress or draw men into action, he has no recourse.

Jesus urged His followers to be second-mile Christians; but most church members want to make Christianity a hundred-yard dash. We forget one of Christ's greatest deeds. When a man is saved, he is saved FROM something, FOR something. In other words a man is intended to do good as well as be good.

Some church members are so afraid they will do too much, that they do far too little. An observer one day watched a

farmer plowing a field with a horse. Every few feet, the horse would stop and look around. Finally, he said to the farmer, "Say, is that horse balky?" The farmer looked up and answered, "No he isn't balky, just lazy. He's so afraid I'll say 'whoa' when he isn't listening, that he stops every few feet, and looks around to listen, so he won't overwork."

That, to my way of thinking, describes a good many folks. They are afraid that they might do a bit more than they are asked to do. Very few Christians are in much danger of over-doing Christianity.

Now, all the alibi-experts are not within the church. It is true there are enough within—those who beg off from leadership and follow-ship as well. But the greater bulk of alibiers is found outside the gates.

One of the common indictments against the church is that it stands as an expensive way to get nothing accomplished. Quite a large number of people believe the church to be as superfluous as a vice-president. Whenever they are approached from a church-going basis, they retort with the familiar phrase, "I think a man can be just as good a Christian outside the church as he can within."

There is a granule of truth hidden in this favorite plea for defense, but it is small indeed. No one will admit more readily than I, that Jesus came to save mankind rather than merely establish a church. Moreover, it is not denied that Golden Rule living can be accomplished without ever stepping foot inside a church. In addition, we admit that the church is a far cry from the institution it should be. But let us best answer this question by asking another one. Yes, a man can be just as good a Christian by not going to church, but IS HE?

I have heard many men say, "I can get just as close to God out in the field on Sunday as I can in church. I feel more like praying out along the stream in the quietude of nature." Again we agree, but ask, "DOES HE DO IT?" I

have yet to see a man praying out in the field. And as a general rule, the man who advocates such escape from church duties is not a very positive force for good within the community.

People may be classified as to whether they are a positive or negative influence in life. The Bible calls them the sheep and the goats. A man may be a power for good without ever fellowshipping with an organized house of God, but the fact remains HE DOESN'T. Very few people disprove this general rule.

Before we agree or disagree too emphatically with the man who boasts he can be just as good, we had better qualify the word "good." Listen to Dr. Christian F. Reisner: "Good people! When I meet folks who think they are good, I can't fit in with them. Folks who are just good are usually good-for-nothing. I'm looking for folks who are good-for-something. No man in his good senses, ever says he can be as good out of the church as in it. A man cannot be a great man and not have faith in God. And by belief in God we mean that people must have belief in a personal God, and must be personally accountable to Him. I don't ask people to serve a hazy thing called goodness. I tell them that the only way to live is to believe in a personal God and to love Him and let Him guide their lives. Goodness will follow."

How many of these so-called "good people" are trying to keep their homes in order, raise useful children, and succeed in the eyes of man and God? Those that do try without the aid of the church, generally fail. To the church-soured man I say, "God doesn't demand that you see Him through stained glass windows. But His Son says, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Is your heart pure now? Can you keep it pure without the aid of the church? Can you live close to God without the help of a place of worship? If you can answer all these questions in the affirm-

ative, then I call you an unusual soul indeed, and a positive exception among mankind."

I have witnessed many hearts that were hardened to God because of the behavior of people who comprised the church. But I am unconvinced that the apathy of these people is attributable to the church itself as Christ established it. The church, with all its blemishes and imperfections, is still the salvation center of a suffering world. It will be a woeful day for humanity when the last of God's houses is padlocked. When the last door is sealed, I'm afraid the gates of heaven will close about the same time.

I am not nearly so much concerned about the mandatory closing of churches in Russia and Germany, as I am about the negligent closing of churches here in America. The church that is locked up by soldiers will one day bounce back despite persecution and governmental opposition; but the church that rots to pieces and dies a natural death, is the more hopeless spectacle. Many a church in America has gone out of business because of the rust of neglect. Indifference closes more churches than all the powers of infidelity.

The world has adopted the program of setting up organizations to accomplish things it wants done. The very prevalence of lodges, guilds, labor unions, service clubs, and leagues, is an evidence of what I am saying. The world knows that there must be organization and acceptance of responsibilities if ever good things are to be accomplished. Jesus, who began His crusade for righteousness, employed the same strategy. He founded His church in the hope that it would be the workshop of eternity; that through it, mankind might be led beside still waters, and drink from the fountain of truth. We have miserably failed the Master, and the biggest offender is the man who practices spiritual alibiing.

The very man who sends his child to Sunday school, repudiates the institution by his own willful absence. Too many parents send their children to church, when they should bring them there. The same man who opposes the church and refuses to contribute to its welfare, is often the first man to send for the minister when his pulse is weak and his sands of time are running low. Even the most emphatic fighters of the church, still ask for benefit of clergy when the undertaker is called.

If the church is good enough to die by, it ought to be good enough to live by. If a man conducted himself with all projects in the same fashion he does where the church is concerned, he would forever occupy a "status quo" which would keep him on a consistent low moral plain, with little hope of improvement. Many men say they won't join church until they are perfect themselves or the church is flawless. If ever the time comes when mankind and all his institutions are beyond correction, the world won't need a church or a minister either. Jesus came into the world because it was anything but unsullied. The man who waits to join the Utopian church will never get to join. There has to be a beginning.

Out in one of the western states, there is an old statute that goes something like this: "Two trains, approaching an intersection, shall come to a stop; and neither shall leave until the other has departed." If you examine the phraseology for a moment, your sense of reason will dictate the fallacy. Such is the status of the man who excuses himself from church, while he waits for it to make itself spotless.

Any mother knows that the first baking venture didn't produce a pie or cake worthy of being awarded first prize at the fair. But she also knows, that with the experience of years, she has learned to bake toothsome delicacies. Today, almost mechanically, with no thought to recipe or ingredients, she bakes instinctively, and quite capably.

This homely truth illustrates the fault of dreamers. They yearn for the results but refuse the necessity of the efforts to get them. Every boy dreams of himself as a hero shooting a winning goal, making the dramatic touchdown, or being hailed as valedictorian of his class. But the same dreamer won't wade through the bumps, the long hours of practice, painstaking months of study and self-denial. These are the unseen sacrifices the victor must pay for his trophies.

Thomas A. Edison once answered a young man who had asked the secret of genius. "Genius is about two per cent inspiration, and about ninety-eight per cent perspiration." The same is true in the church. It takes both to live the more abundant life. The clock must be content to strike one before it can strike twelve, at the rate of a second at a time. The baby must begin by crawling before it can run. Too many deplore the ignominy of beginning at the bottom. They don't want to become as little children. They harden their hearts rather than make them impressionable. They set their minds instead of opening them. And so, the kingdom of heaven suffers.

Life is a queer plan. Apparently a man goes through life, erring along the way, committing sins of omission and commission, making rash judgments, and misunderstanding both God and man. About the time he has learned to profit by these mistakes, that love is the best armor, and forgiveness is akin to Christ, he must pass through the door of death. It seems incongruent that man must die just when he has really learned to live. But of course that constitutes one of the grandest reasons for immortality. Just now, we lament that people procrastinate so long in learning the simple path of life at its best.

The church stands as a monument to Christ, as a great avenue of usefulness. It is a shelter in the time of storm, a haven of rest for the weary, a balm of comfort for the bereaved. Yet, there it stands, abused, maltreated, and neg-

lected. Religion is a way of life, and the church stands ready to point man to that way.

It is neither manly nor profitable for a man to shun the church, and it sounds cowardly for him to lay the blame elsewhere than at his own doorstep. He then becomes like the young rascal who steals mother's jam, and who, to deflect all suspicion, smears a generous portion on little baby brother's face as a shield from blame.

I recall the incident of two ladies who abandoned membership in the church because of a little wrangle over some teaspoons which became confused at a church supper. The strings of identification became mixed, resulting in dual claims of ownership. The unpardonable consequence was the heated exodus of both ladies and their families forever from the church. What a childish way to stir up dissention! I wonder if the kingdom of heaven is worth a couple of spoons.

Some people justify themselves in their absence from church for the strangest reasons. One lady vindicated herself to her own satisfaction by stating that since her husband died, she just couldn't return to church. The very sight of the church brought back the scene of the funeral, and caused her untold grief all over again. In all fairness, the church undoubtedly did have a depressing effect for awhile. But if ever there is a place for the stream of comfort to flow, it should be the church.

Just because a loved one passes away in the home, is no license for the family to move out of the house. The parallel is comparable. The loved one's home should not be abandoned, nor should the place of worship. To anyone suffering from the pain of grief, the church can be recommended as a well-stream of comfort.

Another group of people rise and fall with the ministers who serve them. If there is any kind of divorce that should be sanctioned by the church, it is the divorce of people who

are married to the minister. When conference time rolls around, these minister-idolizers assert, "I just won't ever come to church again if our minister is taken away." What kind of faith is that, anyway? Are we worshipping the man in the pulpit or Christ? Should the nature or character of any minister or layman shatter our faith in God? If it does, I'd investigate the roots of that faith. Somewhere along the line, something is missing.

Then there are the feud alibis. Two families who harbor no extra love for each other, become chronic isolationists. They perch on their respective front porches and exclaim, "I'll never set foot inside that church again until those hateful . . . are out of the church. If people will tolerate them, I can't call them Christians."

No man is so blind to his faults as the man who criticizes the same faults in another. By what virtue of Christianity is any family justified in remaining away from church on such grounds? We often hear the expression, "It will take a lot of funerals to straighten up that church." Let's hope it isn't so.

WHY YOUTH ARE NOT IN CHURCH

As a door to the following pages on youth and the church, I am including a letter from Admiral Richard E. Byrd, the world famous explorer, scientist, and man of posterity. From his words, the reader may glean an evaluation of the importance of youth and the part they may be destined to play in this world's recovery.

Boston, Massachusetts
9 Brimmer Street

My dear Mr. Guyer:

I returned today and found your letter awaiting me. I want to express my sincere appreciation of your very kind remarks and good wishes for my expedition.

May I, in turn, send my best wishes to you for your work with the young people—there is nothing more worth-while in the world today. They constitute the future of the church and the world of tomorrow. Will you please accept my kindest regards for the success of your volume.

Sincerely yours,

R. E. Byrd

WHY YOUTH ARE NOT IN CHURCH

*"Our youth we can have but today;
We may always find time to grow old."*

—Bishop Berkeley.

IT GOES without saying that the hope of tomorrow's church rests on the shoulders of today's youth. On every hand we hear the older members of the church lamenting over the apathy of the young people towards religion. We hear comments on the rapidity of life, the jazz age, and the growing degeneration of the church as an institution. The old expression, "The young people are going to the dogs," is by no means a new one. It has been echoed and re-echoed for generations before us.

If a patient is ill, it is unfair to begin treatment, until we first know for what disease we are treating him. Let us assume that our young people are spiritually ill, and from that point seek to analyze their condition.

At the very outset, we must immediately discount past records. The threadbare comparisons of today with yesterday just simply will not stand the test, nor will they be fitting ones for our purposes. Before we gaze back into the halcyon days of yesteryear when religion was the warp and woof of life itself, we had better know all the facts surrounding those bygone days.

We must ever bear in mind that our youth are passing through the most gigantic vicissitudes ever witnessed by the world. A young man of twenty has seen within his lifetime more revolutionary innovations, changes, and modernization than any dozen of his ancestors combined. The world-shaping inventions, scientific achievements, and social progresses accomplished in the immediate past twenty years, have prac-

tically put to shame the combined progresses of the preceding three hundred years. Children today come into the world regarding such miracles as the radio, telephone, airplane, automobile, and electricity as commonplace. They not only do not consider the unbelievable reality of these things, but unstaggeringly take them for granted. The world in which they live, provides them with daily blessings which are no longer even called unusual. Their's is a world of constant growth and rapid progress.

Let us not be deluded by the so-called spirituality of the "good old days." We must confess that great spiritual revivals belong to the past three centuries, but it is unfair to the church of this generation to concede too much credit to the church or pastorates of those years.

It is to be acknowledged that people did throng into the churches, but this influx was scarcely due to any peculiar hunger on the part of the individual. It was more truly the lack of any place to go, but to church. In those days, the church was a substitute for the diversions and commercial pastimes which we regard as so necessary today. In the present era, our schools, theatres, parks, and dance halls usurp this former patronage; but in those days, such functions were conspicuously absent. The school of itself has rapidly absorbed the church's function as a center of community entertainment and boasts such curricula as athletic campaigns, operettas, dramas, debates, concerts, and the like.

In former years, young people, who for the most part, were saddled to the sundry chores of the farm, were warmly happy when the father announced that the whole family was going to church. Eagerly they raced through their tasks and anticipated their much awaited get-to-gether with other young people. The church took on the atmosphere of a "match factory" since it was the only suitable place where young couples could meet and provide excuses to go home together. Many couples who today are celebrating their

golden wedding anniversaries, will tell you that their early courting found its genesis at the church when the shy young fellow fingered his hat and managed to mutter, "Can I drive you home in my buggy?"

And don't sell this younger generation short on the theory that it is so much worse than those of yesteryear. Fights over girls, the breaking of buggy whips, card-playing in the back of the church, the changing of buggy wheels, and similar things were perpetrated within the shadow of the church. Bullies often interrupted the minister, talked during services, or ridiculed penitential seekers. Many who were led to Christ during those stirring revival days, will tell you that when they came to church, it was from an entirely different motive. No, there were saints and sinners then as much as now. Drunkards often staggered into church and were received in their confession along with the rest. Let it be understood, your writer is not indicting the spirituality of the past to the point of minimizing the great worth that was undoubtedly gained; but he does bare the facts of those circumstances.

It must be appreciated that a good share of those who eventually were saved, would not even have been in church, had there been any place else to go.

With all due respect to the powerful sermonizers of that era, we must qualify their success by citing the nature of the times. People had fewer problems. Oh, it is true sin is sin and always has been the same, but it must not be overlooked that the world was nearly immune from the complexity which binds us today. In the past, the world was a wide-open place of opportunities. Land was free for the asking. If a man wished to pioneer, he could always occupy a parcel of ground, make a clearing, and try his skill. If the farming venture was a failure, he had only to move on to new acres. The youth of today cannot evade failure in that same simple style. If a young man fails on the farm or at the factory, he

cannot shake off his failure by moving on to new scenes. He must stay and fight it out until victory is won.

In the past a scarlet woman was isolated from society, and openly branded for what she was. People today decry the prevalence of sexual looseness and immorality in our present day high schools and colleges. A wise old doctor gives the best explanation of that I have heard. He says, "lasciviousness and abortions are no more frequent now than they used to be; the only difference is that this type of girl now goes to high school whereas in the bygone years, she didn't."

We must be fair to both eras if our appraisal is to be accurate. It is admitted that the younger element today is caught in a mad swirl of torrent which defies complete understanding. The accelerated pace and the ever-changing thrill which come from fast living, are quite bewildering to the twentieth-century youth. Moreover, the young man of today emerges from a quite different home atmosphere than that provided years ago. The custom of other years was to hold family worship service in the home. Grace at the table was taken for granted. Sundays were spent in church attendance and afternoons of hymn-singing at a neighbor's home. A young man couldn't get very far away from home with a horse and buggy. He usually courted and married a girl who seldom lived over ten miles from the home place. Families whose children were contemplating marriage knew all about each other's background. Today, a young couple may meet in a beer garden, suddenly decide to get married, drive out of the state to some Gretna Green, and come home to break the news to their folks.

But, enough for the past; we are more vitally interested in why young people disregard the church today. We can neither change nor re-live the past, so the accent must be on the present time.

One of the outstanding reasons why young people have not subscribed to the church, is that they do not know the

conditions of Christianity. As we have stated, their home life is not conducive to learn much about it either.

One smart young lady in replying to a real estate agent who was trying to sell her a home, said: "A home—I don't need a home. I was born in a hospital, raised in a kindergarten, schooled in a private academy, graduated from college to a life of constant mobility. I eat out of a delicatessen store, spend my mornings on the golf course, my afternoons at bridge, my evenings at the theatre and the dance, and my spare time at the club. I don't need a home; I need a car."

The youth of today need to be introduced to Christ and His church. Their case is not one of rejection nearly as much as a case of ignorance. The church itself has been lame in disseminating information about the Christ, and so is partly to blame for this condition. It should be remembered that religion is both "caught" and "taught." Sometimes it becomes exceedingly difficult to accomplish either. You can hardly expect our young people to catch religion on the run. One minister remarked that if rapidity continues in our living, we'll soon have to jump into our cars and preach to people on the run.

To learn if you like a thing, you must first taste it. Every adult can recall the games and sports that were repulsive to him as a youngster. It is only natural that if a boy has a propensity in a certain direction, he'll one day follow that leaning. Even grownups choose the things they can do the handiest. The boy who has natural power with a ball-bat will prefer baseball to something else.

On the other hand, it is possible to help a boy cultivate a liking for things which at first seem distasteful. The Catholics are wise in requiring the study of Latin, since they know that the youngster will thereby learn to acquire the habit of mastering the difficult.

As a boy, I had the notion that I simply hated tomatoes, carrots, asparagus, cabbage, cauliflower, and many other

nutritious vegetables. It was mostly mental; for I was so convinced I didn't care for them, that I never bothered to taste them to see. Several years later, I ventured to sample these foods, and today have actually kindled a relish for them.

The church is a sepulchral cemetery to most young folks. They have imagined it to be dark and gloomy. Attendance is seldom stressed from the invitation vantage; it is always assigned to the compulsory list. Any boy detests prohibition. The very flavor of "Thou shalt not" is repugnant to the nature and liberty of youth. He wants to know what he CAN do. If you want to keep your child out of the cookie jar, don't tell him to keep out, for in the doing, you give him an excellent idea he didn't even have.

Christianity has become a strange hotel of alien roomers. Hardly any two are alike. Her diversified doctrines and conflicting formalities leave the outsider a little stupefied as to what to believe. The unfortunate thing about denominations is the fact that any man can go off on a tangent about a particular verse of Scripture, and institute a new church. The smoke screen of confusion is so entangling, that scarcely one out of twenty can discern through the haze what Jesus is really like.

You may retort, "Oh, but Christ made it very plain in His Sermon on the Mount." Yes, that is true, and He also made His discipleship clear; but one wonders what kind of answers you would get if you suddenly asked a hundred different people to put down in writing their conception of the Christian life.

We must not be too harsh, nor too eager to condemn. For our own part, the Sermon on the Mount is enough to keep anyone's feet busy. We must not condemn those who want to know more about God, nor those who know too little of Him. Youth are of the opinion that they must be allowed to explore God as they would a study in school. Young people

today find it increasingly difficult to harmonize God with daily findings in the fields of astronomy, geology, and anthropology. This searching instinct must not be bridled. Surely God is as worthy of scrutiny as electricity, and His mighty works are as meritorious as the study of earthworms or grasshoppers. God welcomes investigation, and He can stand up under it. We would hate to have a faith that couldn't tolerate the searchlight of examination. But on the other hand, not everyone wants to know the unknowable. There are millions who can trust God for the answers. There are mysteries in life that cannot be comprehended with finite faculties and limited minds. Lazarus, returning from the dead, was powerless to describe his experience to eager listeners. Imagine a world composed of people who were all blind and deaf. Suppose that one of them suddenly received sight and hearing. Could he, even then, make it clear to the rest, the things he saw? To most of the Christians, His grace is sufficient for them. The eternities of life will never fully be fathomed on this side the golden shore.

Thousands of people use the telephone and radio, and still can't begin to explain it. Yet, this handicap doesn't impair their capacity to be afforded pleasure from their appreciation. Thousands walk beneath the stars and thrill at the beauty of flowers without ever being able to call them by name.

Jesus left the argumentation to others. He didn't greet the world with an invitation to accept a creed. He only said, "Believe in Me." Christ indulged in not one single speculation. He was more concerned about what a man was and could become, rather than what he thought or had been. Rather than stoop to the arguments of the origin and nature of things, He entreated the world to abhor that which was evil and cleave to that which was good.

Christ stands like a skilled navigator on our ship of safety. It isn't so important that we know where all the rocks are,

as long as He knows where the channel goes. Jesus pleads with the world to feed the good and starve the bad. Two things He asks: Deny yourself and carry your cross. The things He admonished the world to do are found in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew's Gospel. If we do these things, we are building on the rock.

The young man should come to know that the best institutions in life find their beginnings in Christ. The simple story of the Good Samaritan has done more for the erection of asylums and hospitals than all the rest of the words of time combined.

Christ's picture of the final judgment is neither difficult nor unfair. The sheep are those who have lived for others; the goats are those who have lived for themselves. Many a young man is living close to the kingdom of heaven without knowing it. It is a good bit like the man who spoke prose all his life and never knew it.

The youth of the world, from their maelstrom of indecision, find it hard to gain a faith that is up-to-date. Let them be assured that the problems which face them today, though more acute and more plentiful, are in essence, the problems that faced their grandfathers. We will always have vice and virtue in the world, and the sooner we begin to overcome the goblin of sin, the more pleasant will be our after years.

It is unfortunate that most folks come to Christ after they are of very little use to His work. A nervous breakdown or loss of health, sudden tragedy in the family, loss of wealth—these often are the factors that send a man to Christ. To be sure, his soul will always find a refuge there, but what a pity that he cannot come as a young man. Christ was a young man. He enjoyed the gold of health. His heart was strong and His body was throbbing with vitality. His rules of life were laid down to be followed from the very start of life, not as a grim interpolation after adversity sets in.

Another consideration that must not be overlooked, is the matter of standards. No man, young or old, is interested in anything if the aim is too low. As someone has ably said, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, else what is heaven for?"

There is a single phrase that elicits more courage and enthusiasm than any other challenge I have ever heard. It is that simple phrase, "I Dare You." As a boy I came home many times with skinned knees, torn trousers, wet feet and blackened eye. When my father asked what had happened, I simply answered, "A group of the boys were playing follow the leader, and dared me to follow." Being a little fellow, I usually got the raw end of the deal, but I did derive a lot of satisfaction from knowing within my heart, that I had dared to accept the challenge. Whether climbing a tree, knocking the chip off another boy's shoulder, or jumping across a brook, it was the same. Being a short-legged little fellow, I sometimes suffered the consequences, but I always felt inwardly stronger for the experience. I have since found a great deal of comfort in Lincoln's idea on how long a person's legs should be. The great emancipator said, "It doesn't matter how long a man's legs are, just so they reach from his body to the ground." All the world rises to the challenge when someone says, "I Dare You."

We admit that the standard of Christ is high indeed. We would not ordain it otherwise. If Christianity fails because it asks too much, it is at least a high failure. If we make it succeed by making it ask too little, it is then a low success. I have often ruminated on the results of Christ's conversation with the rich young ruler, had He lowered the standard. The man might have become a lukewarm disciple on such a basis, but even then I doubt it. Experience teaches that a man will give almost anything to secure something he believes to be worth-while. You can hoist a tent and announce a free show, but your crowd will be disappointing.

People know that in order to get something good, they have to pay the price.

Lower the standard and open the gates to the populace, and you simultaneously cheapen the thing. A boy proudly wears an athletic "letter" on his sweater, because it means he has gained recognition for having met the qualifications it demands. It symbolizes long hours of practice, many falls and bumps. It means that he has engaged in friendly conflict to earn it; and more than that, the price it exacts is one that only a handful can meet. But let any athletic coach give out awards promiscuously, and they immediately lose their value. You can purchase any number and manner of war medals from the pawnshop; but only the man who earned his on the bloody field of valor, can appreciate its true worth.

For a good many years, select people were honored by the state of Kentucky by being given the commission, "Kentucky Colonel." But one governor indiscriminately handed out several thousand commissions, to increase his popularity; and today, as the result, the commission has lost its value.

Whether it be a lodge, service club, university, or the kingdom of heaven, the thing that makes it worth-while, is the entrance requirement. For that reason, Christianity should be the finest challenge in the world for our youth. Youth demands an appeal with high ideals and lofty goals. Christ honors a man by regarding him big enough for the job of being a Christian. The Master makes it hard to be a Christian, but easy to be a Pharisee. Let no man delude you, for the Christian life is not meant for people with weak backbones. It is a man's job.

You have witnessed examples of great singing teachers, athletic directors, or artists, who have spent a good many years in teaching their understudies. And quite often, the pupil outshines the teacher. When that occurs, the pupil begins to lose respect for his teacher. If the student can ex-

cel the teacher, the teacher is no longer useful. The apprentice then seeks a master who can teach him more. Thank God, in the Christian faith, we have a Master who has never been equalled, much less surpassed by any of His disciples. Christ still sets a pattern that challenges every red-blooded man, woman, and child in the universe.

While youth may have its faults, it occupies the strange position of holding the keys to tomorrow's church. Youth insists on a faith that meets changing needs, and fortunately so. There is no good reason why the church should shrink or apologize on this point. Is not Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever? And is He not big enough for any crisis or change that seizes the world? Too many good church people are afraid Christ isn't equal to the demands made of Him. We need have no fear that growth or progress will be inharmonious with His program. I presume that if Christ returned to the world, He Himself would be hailed as the leader of these teeming thousands of young people who want to do something worth-while.

It was a lad long ago who was the indispensable instrumentality for the accomplishment of a great miracle, the feeding of the multitude. That little fellow with his loaves and fishes helped Christ teach one of His grandest lessons. Somehow I feel that somewhere among these youth of ours, is another boy whose willing life is going to actuate the world into a fiery crusade for truth. From these youth of ours, young men and women are going to step out and help feed the multitudes the bread of life, for which they are so hungry. A little child may yet lead them.

Youth are eager for a religion that will enable them to live lives of courage and usefulness. Youth are ambitious. The example of young Douglas Corrigan, the "wrong-way flier" who spanned the Atlantic, is a citation of what I am talking about. Young Corrigan, from boyhood, planned what he wanted to do. He dreamed of it, lived for it, sacrificed for

it; and so, when the unbelievable news reached the world that this slim young aviator conquered the mighty Atlantic in his "hunk of junk" as his plane was called, it could hardly recognize it as possible. If the world only knew the heart of youth, it could believe a great many more things that haven't yet been accomplished.

Youth demands a leader to show them the way. This leader must be fearless, pioneering, adventurous, intellectual, awe-inspiring. They insist on a faith that answers their questions about life and death, about the origin of things and the future of things. Their faith must be as secure as Gibraltar and as new as tomorrow; it must be dynamic and progressive. It must not obstruct their lives with hand-cuffs of restrictions. It must accentuate the "Thou shalts" and minimize the "Thou shalt nots." It must dare face science and transcend its objections to religion. It must have an answer for the infidel and the agnostic. It must prove to them that the grave is only a shadow and that sorrow is unreal. Such a faith is Christianity, and such a leader is Christ, but WE have not presented Him as such.

These youth want the facts, but the facts do not tell them the same story as our words from the pulpit. The youth have investigated for themselves, and they know better than we do. They have learned that church growth in the United States has come to a plateau. They are aware that the rural churches are disintegrating, and that urban churches are slipping as well. They look at our churches and see duplication, bad management, poor financing, and the policy of magnifying non-essentials. Our youth fraternize with other youth of all creeds and denominations, and wonder why the church can't do as well as they have done. American boys of Catholic and Protestant faith play ball together, enjoy recreation together, debate, fellowship, sing, and reason together in deep confidence. It is a little strained

for them to quite appreciate then, why their respective churches cannot do as well.

In a little village of less than a thousand people there are six churches. Each minister works independently as though he were the only ambassador for God in that community. All six pastors work overtime and merely succeed in duplicating the work. They won't attend union services or permit them. They set up their church units like rival business houses. On the whole it presents an ugly and unspiritual front. Each church finds the financial sledding harder and harder with passing time. None of the churches are even half filled on Sunday. They have had to resort to fairs and carnivals to support themselves. The ministers eye each other like detectives, and preach as though the greatest enemy to Christ was the one around the corner occupying the heretic's pulpit. They blight love and cancel brotherhood. Moreover, those churches are doomed for certain disintegration.

Our wide-eyed youth see these things, and wonder. They firmly believe in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, but fail to see the license for such inter-church behavior. The church must learn the lesson that the farmer is just now learning. For a good many years the farmer regarded his neighbor as his deadliest rival. If the neighbor got up at four in the morning, he would arise at half past three. If his neighbor worked until nine o'clock, he would work until nine-thirty. On and on it went. Each wanted to outdo the other in harvesting first, selling for the best price, buying machinery, etc. But after a long siege of this dog-eat-dog policy, the farmer began to discover that after all his neighbor was anything but his rival. How could a man be his enemy when he is in the same boat? If prices went down, his neighbor suffered the same as he did. If drought came, the neighbor's crops were as much in jeopardy as his own. Little by little, the farmer realized that if conditions were to

ever be any better, they would have to come as a result of mutual cooperation, farmer with farmer. Today, the farmers have organized. Granges, harvesting gangs, cooperatives, and the like have taken over the problems for solution.

The church will one day learn that the neighbor church is anything but an enemy. Is not Christ the unseen Head of every Christian church? Do not Catholics and Protestants alike suffer when religion is assailed? Are not the Jews and Catholics of Germany in the same pit of despair just now? When anti-Christians attack, it is time for all churches to band together against a common foe. History shows that war makes comrades of many alien people. In the last great war, the Allied Armies were composed of many races and colors. The chaplains who ministered unto wounded soldiers comforted aching hearts irrespective of creed or race. In adversity and despair we are brothers. Why are we so much different then in peace and prosperity?

These are questions that baffle the youth of America. They want to know why the church does not set its own house in order before it condemns the man on the street. Our youth believe in peace and brotherhood, but they want to see a little of it practiced first. They believe in Christianity but they know that not all Christian nations are nations of Christians? These young people can't be kidded. They want the truth.

“THE FORGOTTEN POWER”

*“To pray together, in whatever tongue
Or ritual, is the most tender
Brotherhood of hope and sympathy
That men can contract in this life.”*

—Madame De Staël.

As a foreword to this chapter on prayer, I wish to quote a portion of a letter written to me by Dr. George Washington Carver, the celebrated negro scientist. Doctor Carver is at present the Director of the Agricultural Research and Experiment Station of the Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama. This lowly man has emerged as the potential Moses of his race, and has through prayer, compelled the earth to speak its secrets. Declining partnership offers from the late Thomas A. Edison, and more recently the directorship of DuPont Laboratories, Doctor Carver has chosen to serve his race, in the hope that economic emancipation may be theirs. He is a deeply spiritual man, rises at an early hour for secret communication with God, and will one day become immortal.

I quote from his letter: “My viewpoint is the same as yours. I see no other way to survive the trend of these times except through prayer, and the Great Spirit who directs all our successful efforts.”—G. W. Carver.

“THE FORGOTTEN POWER”

“And Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees”—Cowper.

THERE is a dormant powerhouse whose dynamos have too long been silent. It is the most towering pillar of strength the church has ever known, yet it has been laid away on the shelf of disuse. From creation's first morning, God intended that His children use this avenue of benefit to keep in touch with heaven. I refer to the forgotten power of prayer.

“Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

“Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice
Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice
And cry, ‘Behold, he prays!’

“Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters heaven with prayer.”

(James Montgomery).

To appreciate prayer you have to return to the garden of Eden. One wonders what were the thoughts and feelings of earth's first couple. Transpose yourself to that scene of bewilderment. Behold the strangeness of this new world, of life, of the wonders of earth and sky. Can any mind comprehend the indescribable sensations of new-born souls

placed in a mysterious world? How Adam and Eve must have eyed the unfolding glories and magic revelations of God's universe! From whence had they come? Who were they? What were they to do? By whom were they created? When would it end? What was behind this vast panorama of mysteries? These and a hundred questions must have danced through their minds as they curiously tried to fathom their existence.

And then, the awful stillness was broken. It was the voice of God! Man could hear and understand. God spoke and man listened. But more than that, man was given the power of speech! He, too, could speak. Into the world God had placed the divine medium of communication with heaven—the power of prayer. What unspeakable agony it would have been for man to gaze and wonder, yet find his lips sealed. What brutal cruelty it would have been for God to have created him an animal of silence. It is the glory of man that God gave the world its greatest blessing of heavenly contact, the telegraphy of prayer. Prayer not only changes things; it changes people as well. It is the one golden avenue by which man may cross from earth to glory.

Jesus taught by precept and example that a man could see more of God on bended knee than he could on tiptoes. To Christ Himself, prayer was a welcome escape from the stress of earthly pathos. It was a hidden reservoir from whose waters His spiritual strength was daily renewed for the duties ahead. Prayer was the secret of His matchless power and undaunted courage. It was from those quiet little talks and prayerful retreats with God, that Jesus was able to emerge, equal to the darkest dangers that awaited Him. The battle of Calvary was first waged in Gethsemane's garden. Jesus had to be reconciled to death, before He was equal to its throes. In all hours of ordeal, it was the constant contact with the Father, that gave our Master the soul to conquer.

The church would do well to return to its forgotten love of prayer. One of the laws of life is that use defeats deterioration. The machinery that is never used, soon rusts into disability. The garden that is neglected soon lies hidden beneath the weeds. The arm that is held rigid becomes shortly paralyzed into immobility. Even people who fail to pursue service, wither into spiritual death. By the same token, prayer is no exception. If the wires that connect man with God, are not constantly reverberating with messages to and from the throne of grace, they are soon rendered useless. The power suddenly becomes dead, and all the belated, frantic telegraphing of the desperate sinner may not evoke reception.

Prayer has been the favorite target of the agnostic. It has been mercilessly ridiculed and relegated to oblivion by the unbeliever. It is quite understandable how finite minds and skeptical hearts have come to regard prayer as an empty voice. To the man who thinks he can accept only what he sees, it is little wonder that prayer knocks at his door in vain. His little world of four walls cannot fathom the unseen.

To the man who is unconvinced of the reality of God, prayer is an absurdity. It seems reasonable that if there is no God, naturally there cannot be communication with a nonentity. But prayer presupposes the existence and response of God, and its grandest fruits substantiate this reality. If there be no God, how can we explain the countless thousands of answered prayers, and by what strange power then, has the world been transformed, if not through this medium of heavenly contact?

As you look back upon the phenomenal power of the early Christian church, you at once catch the secret of its strength. It was prayer that helped defeat the forces of evil then; and if they are to be overcome in this present age, it must again be through prayer. Saintly James, the brother of Christ and

head of the church at Jerusalem, was on his knees so often, that they became calloused like a camel's. Those great souls of the Christian era knew that it was not only a great thing to talk to men about God; but a far greater thing to talk to God about men.

Prayer, whether personal or intercessory, makes men stronger. One of the most indelible memories of my heart's calendar, is the remembrance of a prayer my mother offered in my behalf, when I chanced to overhear her talking to God in the seclusion of her room. Surely no young man can ever forget or deliberately negate the prayers of those who love him.

It is unfortunate for the world that more of its people have not leaned upon the steadyng arms of prayer. It usually remains for tragedy or adversity to awaken this dormant sleeper. I have been called into non-Christian homes that have been shadowed by the specter of approaching death. The pitiful entreaties that emanated from those bewildering hearts, beseeching God to spare their loved ones, were indeed tear compelling. In their desperation, desolate souls promised God obedience and fidelity to His every commandment. Yet, in just a few weeks, when the loved one is well on the road to recovery, these sacred pledges are long since forgotten. When reminded of their vows, they shrug their shoulders and retort, "Oh well, he would have pulled through anyway. It was the doctor that saved him." And with that terse abrogation, they hang up the receiver on God, and smile in the independence of their regained composure.

While it is true that "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," nevertheless prayer was never intended to be a life-saver or shot of digitalis to the failing heart. Prayer was designed to be man's constant privilege, not merely a last resort. It is a lamentable pity that the world has never recognized the daily blessings of prayer, over and above its emergency values.

It would be interesting to analyze the contents of the world's prayers. It would be safe to speculate that ninety-five per cent of them fall under the category of requests. In blunt language, folks generally don't go to God unless they want something. They forget to thank Him for what they have already received. They forget to petition Him for strength and courage, for patience, and for submission to the divine will. Almost invariably, the man who prays, wants God's help to win a sweepstake prize, an athletic victory, or a jump in the stock market. Most prayer gestures are bids for God to become a partner in some sordid commercial transaction. Little thought is given to God's side of the issue. Rather we should ask ourselves: Is my prayer a worthy one? Is it a necessity? Am I calling on Him because I enjoy the communion or because He is my last resort? Is my prayer selfish or altruistic? Will the answer benefit myself or others? Will His answer suffice, or must it be answered my way? These questions and more, help indicate whether we are praying to God in the right spirit.

I recall reading about a man who prayed to God to do something about a wicked neighbor of his. It seemed that the petitioner himself was not always as pious as he might have been, but nonetheless he continued the supplication for reprimand to the neighbor whom he thought needed it. At length he cried out, "Oh Lord, please take this wicked one from the world." It is said that the voice of God responded, "Which one?"

Yes, too often our own hearts are not in tune with God. It seems that when men do pray, they pray for the wrong things. Little wonder, then, that prayers often seem to go unanswered. But let us hasten to add at this point, that every prayer is answered eventually. The answer may not come in the moment of petition; it may even be a different sort of answer than expected; and it may be that the very silence itself is the answer. Sometimes, we presume that

God maintains thoughtful silence, until the praying one recognizes that such a prayer doesn't merit fulfillment. It cannot be said that the prayer was unanswered. Perhaps the very stillness of meditation is a far wiser reply than the answer expected.

In striking contrast to this type of prayer, is the childish expectation. They tell us of a little child who was overheard by his parents while praying. As they listened, the little fellow was saying, "And dear Lord, please send me a bicycle." The fond parents, who hadn't even guessed what the little fellow had in his heart, thought they ought to do something about it. Not only would it please the boy, but it would also strengthen the little tyke's faith in prayer. However, they reasoned to themselves that the youngster was too small for a bicycle, so they bought him a tricycle and placed it where he would find it. Intently, they listened from the next room as the little fellow discovered his gift, and then turned in prayer again. You can imagine their amazement as they heard the believing little soul say, "Dear God, I thank you for the answer to my prayer, but I did think that YOU would know the difference between a bicycle and a tricycle."

An avalanche of prayers have been emitted from the battlefield, the sickbed, the death scene, and from countless other walks of human depravity and desperation. Yet, why has the world generally and the church particularly never inculcated the prayer habit as a part of its normal life? Surely people daily feel the need of Divine guidance. Is it that we are teaching our younger generations to be self-sufficient? Surely a perusal of our school assemblies gives evidence that the prayer period has nearly vanished from the program of the child. Can it be that this generation has developed a pseudo pride which renders dependence on higher help obsolete? Whatever may be the contributing causes, the fact remains that somewhere along the line, mankind has lost its habit of prayer.

Family worship, which used to be the springboard for the beginning of every day, is now as rare as the horse and buggy. The asking of grace at the table is already a rarity. These forgotten symbols of yesteryear, are resurrected now and then when the minister happens to be a guest in the home. It is often both amusing and embarrassing when the minister stays for lunch. The mother will bow her head and ask the minister to say grace, while one of the children will reach for the bread. Naturally the mother colors with humiliation, but you can scarcely blame the child for its seeming sacrilege. To the child, this is something quite new, since it had never been taught to observe this devotion at the table before. These fast vanishing vestiges of spirituality may be harbingers of what tomorrow will be like.

One of the commonest responses we hear these days is, "What do I get out of it?" This utilitarian world wants to know what kind of pay there is for effort expended. Whether it be a serving on a committee, helping with a civic drive, or even reading a book, the self-same question bounces back, "What do I get out of it?"

It is recalled that after one of Robert Ingersoll's great addresses, a young man sought to meet the reknown atheist. Ingersoll had been amazing audiences all over America with his convincing creed of unbelief. Upon seeing Ingersoll, the young man expressed an eager desire to espouse the new creed. He wanted to know how he could go about taking up the cause. Ingersoll looked into the eyes of the youth and asked, "Son, just what do you expect to get out of it?" One cannot appreciate the sincerity of this question unless he is aware of the revenues that had poured into the famous non-believer's hands. The lucrative income Ingersoll enjoyed, explained better than words, why he had expounded his catching theory.

I sincerely believe that even the skeptic has a right to know what dividends accrue from prayer. A man should

get something out of it. If any man cares to peek into the lives of faith-believing people, he will learn what benefits these people derive.

Watch that mother whose only son met an untimely death. Her great heart is broken, and her life seemingly rendered empty by the cruel hand of fate. But follow her as she retires to her chamber of prayer. Falling upon her knees, she pours out the feelings of a soul bereft in sorrow. After communion with God, she next goes to His word, the Bible. After reading a few tender passages, her tears are dried, and the smile of blessed assurance returns. Sharing with Mary, the Mother of Christ, the loss of a son, she learns to understand the symphony of sorrow. Stepping bravely out on the promises of God, she prepares to face the world again, but inwardly consoled by her treasure in heaven to compensate for her earthly loss.

You can never convince a praying man or woman that prayer holds no compensations. Experience has taught them better. They know what it means to be crushed under a load of burdens, and then enjoy the sweet release of unbuckled shackles. The heart that sings a song of joy where a funeral dirge formerly held sway, will testify to the changing power of prayer. The world doesn't have to assume prayer as it would a theory in geometry. Prayer brings its own proof of power. Very often the only difference between a coward and a hero, is prayer.

It is true that like a great many other gifts from heaven, prayer has also been abused and misunderstood. Jesus taught the world how to pray, but the world is prone to forget easily. It is hardly the fault of God if our prayers are not backed by sincerity. As a child I used to aspire to pray like some of the old patriarchs of our church. Their high-sounding words perforated the atmosphere with power and exactitude. I used to wonder if I could ever master the language of those flowery prayers. I even aped some of the

expressions in my own praying. But as time passed by, I began to wonder if God, after all, wanted prayers of such regular sameness. I came to believe that God knew the condition of our hearts and the extent of our needs before we spoke, so then it must be sincerity and spirit that God wants most. Many a formalistic prayer becomes a monotonous chant that doesn't bespeak the true needs of the soul. While we should try to make our prayers as beautiful as our thoughts, let no man discount the efficacy of the humblest prayer, if it carries the earnest petition of the soul's need.

As a minister once said to a little chap who was suffering excruciating pain on a hospital cot, "Sonny, pray to God. If your pain is so intense that you can't think what to say, be assured God can hear your prayer even through the groan." I like to think of the Heavenly Father as being absorbed in the prayers of even the most illiterate of His children. From couches of pain and dark scenes of death, we may be comforted in knowing that our prayers have found their way to the throne of grace.

If a man has a minor problem, he usually goes to the listening ear of his closest friend. But when a man's very soul is jeopardized, it is then that he likes to go to God. For there are some things in life that even personal friends can neither appreciate nor have license to know. A writer recently made the statement that people take their small troubles to God, and their big troubles to a lawyer. There is much truth in this thought, and whatever truth there is, reminds us that we have reversed our scale of values. I wonder what the effect would have been if people had taken all their problems, both large and small, to God. I wonder what the effect would be on marriage and divorce, on criminality, on business, on prosperity and adversity, on peace among nations, and on countless other human relationships, if prayer had only been offered. It was said by a radio evangelist that our houses of Congress need a prayer meet-

ing. Surely prayer in the high places of government is as essential as in the church or the home. The chaplain of our state legislature was asked by a visitor if it was his duty to pray for the legislators. He replied, "Yes, it's my duty to pray for them; but sometimes when I look over the caliber of men sent here, I pray for the state instead."

Some years ago, an experiment was conducted to test the efficacy of prayer. Twenty people, who were patients in a certain hospital, were selected. Prayers were offered for ten of them, while the other ten were left to their own fate. The outcome proved exactly nothing. No appreciable recovery was enjoyed by those prayed for, nor was the improvement of the other ten lessened any by the absence of prayer. Both groups eventually regained normalcy, with scarcely any distinction of difference in rapidity of recuperation. But was this a test of prayer?

Surely in the eyes of God, such a demonstration was a mockery. Did not the neglected ten patients have just as much right to get well as the other group? Moreover, was there any superior evidence of faith in the patients for whom the prayers were offered? God will never allow His providence to be made a guinea pig for curious minds.

Very closely akin to this thought of the power of prayer and its relationship to sickness, is the thought of divine healing. Many people bewail the seeming disappearance of this power. They point out that the early disciples had special gifts by which the sick could be healed, and the blind made to see. Before we pass hasty judgment, it would be well to analyze the motive behind the deed.

I personally believe that divine healing is just as real today as it ever was. Can anyone point to a case of recovery from illness in which God has not had a hand? But I share the thought with a great many other theologians that to appreciate the power of prayer over physical maladies, we must first be certain the prayer is in keeping with God's

plan. Too many people expect miracles when the remedy is close at hand. Miracles continue to happen every day, but you may rest assured that when the power is given for their performance, it will not be for grandiose purposes. Christ Himself never asserted this power before a grandstand filled with wide-eyed watchers. Almost invariably He retired to a secret bower, to which only the faithful were admitted. Moreover, there was no exchange of fee for the service. The present day healers with their outstretched palms, are committing sacrilege in His name. The world is growing wise to their nostrums. Professional contortionists, and testifying endorsers, are becoming known for what they are. We must not discredit the actual divine healing that is daily being done; but we must identify these fakes who are using the church for their counter. Occasionally, a legitimate healing emerges from this smoke screen of delusion; but the roots of these successful incidents, are grounded in the individual's own faith, not in the fanfare of the mendicant.

If one cares to explore medicine, he soon learns that faith and work on the part of the church, have done much to effect present-day success in that field. The early monks and members of the clergy combed the woods and fields for new herbs and formulas, all of which have since passed into the possession of the medical profession. Christ Himself never discouraged the practice of legitimate medicine. Luke, the great gospel writer, was himself a doctor as well as a disciple.

It is unfortunate that the minister and the doctor are not better friends. Their paths cross so often, it is a shame their hearts do not blend as well. A poor minister can cancel the work of the best doctor; and by the same token, the poorest practitioner can negate the progress of the finest minister. Both men need the strong arm of prayer to successfully serve in their respective fields. It is a fallacy to suppose that the minister's only work is the treatment of the spiritual; and it is equally fallacious to presume that the doctor treats

only the physical. Many a patient under a doctor's care, in reality needs spiritual stability. Likewise many a forlorn soul who overfeeds on spirituality, is a fit subject for medical attention. They once brought a man to Jesus. That great Master of men looked at the man and said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Straightway, the man arose and found himself. His trouble was not physical, but spiritual. One cannot study those great paintings, "The Doctor" and "Sentenced to Death" for five minutes without acknowledging that the minister and doctor are inseparable. Man is the only animal that protects its weak, and it is largely through the medium of prayer that this can be achieved. When the disciples received their commission, they were sent out two by two, to preach and to heal. But it must be remembered that through prayer they were to keep in touch with the source of their power, God Himself.

More things are wrought by prayer than heaven and earth have ever dreamed. Prayer, however, is like truth, in that there are two sides to it. We recall the incident of the disciples praying for the release of Peter who was in prison. As they prayed, there was a knock at the door, and lo and behold, there stood Peter, the answer to their prayer. The poor disciples were so astonished, they refused to believe it was he. Thus a great many people refuse to believe their prayers when they are answered. It seems too good to be true. But not always will prayers be translated into such rapid fulfillments. I know of a man who for more than fifteen years prayed for his mother's conversion. If you were to have asked him during that time, how his prayers were coming along, he undoubtedly would have answered rather discouragingly. Yet within the last year, the answer came; and today, mother and son are united with their Savior in common love. One must always bear in mind that God, being eternal, is not hurried.

The unreasonableness of man himself, does great injury to prayer. A group of children, intent on a picnic, may secretly pray for a nice day. Yet, on the morning of their affair, a driving rain greets their eyes. To their childish minds, the picnic is all-important. They cannot appreciate that perhaps the farmers need rain worse than they need a picnic. Again, prayers are offered by nations whose armies are engaged in battle. It goes without saying that both sides cannot be victorious; in fact, one wonders if anyone ever wins a war. Yet, we must trust God to know what eventualities are best for us, and not for us alone, but for generations unborn. We must ever remember that God's will must be done. As Lincoln said, "Let us pray not only that God is on our side, but that we are on His, as well." Christ in Gethsemane, wanted to live as much as any man. He was young and strong, in good health, and with a great capacity for life and usefulness. Yet the will of His father ordained death. The only prayer that could be answered under those circumstances, had to be one asking for divine approbation to personal petitions. His will and the Father's had to be one and the same. As it developed, Christ emerged from that prayer-battle, victorious.

We are so apt to pray to God like a child making a "want list" for Santa Claus. As a colored parishioner once exclaimed, "Man, has we got a preacher! Why, dat man prayed to de Lawd for things we never knew He even had!"

Out in the midwest during the recent drought, a certain community was nearly defeated in morale and spirit. The people had nearly abandoned all hope and faith in God. The minister of the village church, as a last resort, called a special service, at which the entire populace was to appeal to God for rain.

People flocked into the little sanctuary who hadn't been inside any church in twenty years. Knees creaked in prayer that hadn't been used for such purposes for longer than they

cared to tell. The congregation sang spirited hymns such as "Shall We Gather at the River" and "Sunshine and Rain." All in all, the serious, desperate picture breathed tragedy and pathos. The minister that day, cast aside his notes, and preached from the depths of his heart. Prayers ascended to the throne of grace from lips that were never more sincere. These people had reached their extremity. They were ready to do anything in return for the gift of rain.

Just as the service was about to close, a little fellow pointed to the window, and cried, "Look! It's raining!" The people rushed to the windows and viewed a torrential downpour. Amid tears and joy, they hurried to the vestibule and danced as though mad. Under the canopy they stood, their outstretched hands catching the patter of the welcome drops. Suddenly, through the crowd, marched a little girl. Triumphantly she raised her umbrella and walked out into the rain, towards home. Of all who came to pray for rain, only a little girl brought an umbrella, believing it would come. "O ye, of little faith!"

If ever the church is to regain its lost power, it must return to the secret bower of prayer. Not in high-sounding phrases, but in humble sincerity will this power be found. For every public prayer offered, there should be a thousand private ones. The child of God should arise and pray to God for strength during the day. He should be quietly prayerful during the heated trials of the week. As the blanket of night falls upon his home, his face should be lifted to heaven in obedient gratefulness for the protection and shelter of the day. Prayer should be as thoroughly permeated in the heart of the Christian as is new blood in a transfusion to a dying patient. Prayer should not be a "must" of life, but a privilege. It would be well for the world to recognize that power must come down from heaven. Whenever a man ceases to look up, he ceases to live in that direction. King David, look-

ing down from his palace upon the wife of Uriah, from that moment began to go down. It will always be so.

Moreover, the Christian does not stop with prayer. From that moment of quiet talking with his Lord, he then goes forth to help actuate his petition. Faith and good works must accompany prayer. We must ever help to make it so. People who pity starving birds, can best help the case by spreading a few crumbs along with their sentiments.

One of these days, the world is going to accept the power of prayer. It will cease to laugh at or ridicule the praying man. Mankind hasn't learned his spiritual alphabet until he has learned that no finer avenue of human expression is extended to man than the much abused forgotten channel of prayer. When the church returns to this neglected spring of eternal goodness, the world will witness the return of hope to desolate eyes, the return of courage to beaten people, the entrance of comfort to troubled hearts, and the joy of purpose to derelict souls. Prayer changes things, and it also changes people.

"LET THE CHIPS FALL WHERE THEY MAY"

"When men speak ill of thee, live so as nobody may believe them."—Plato.

Up until now, we have singled out the blemishes against the church and have ascribed the blame to various parties concerned. We have traced the genesis of the church, witnessed its decline, studied out its weaknesses, perused the man on the street and the man in the pulpit; we have evaluated the alibis people offered for their disinterest, and have even explored hidden closets of power. It is always difficult to point the finger in a given direction and shout, "There's the villian!"

Perhaps in respective cases, the minister or layman, or even the outsider is partially to blame. So now, before we unfold any pet solutions to the problem of the crumbling church, we are going to open our heavy artillery and fire at the enemy. It may be that some of the shrapnel will fall upon our own heads; it may be that distant targets will be stormed. Nonetheless, we open our last volley in full blast, and let the chips fall where they may.

A well known humorist said, "The trouble with criticism is, that those who are willing to listen to it, are invariably the people who neither need nor deserve it." And so, the minister who scolds his congregation, comes to know that the people before him are not the ones who need the chastising. It is unfortunate that the handful who are faithful to the church, are the ones most viciously victimized by the scathings intended for those absent. They must suffer the brunt of criticism for their delinquent cousins who stay at home. It is indeed lamentable that outside attractions have narrowed the church-going faithful down to a mere handful.

The almighty Sunday paper has replaced more than one Bible in the home, and the Saturday night highball has edged out the Sunday morning obligation. Still and all, the church's greatest enemy is neither the comic strip nor the highball, but a thing called misunderstanding of values.

It is unfortunate for Christ, that the world measures His religion, not by His own life and standards, but by those who profess Him. The pagan refusal of the world at large to accept Christianity, is not due to any faults of Christ, but to the faults of people who call themselves Christians. Christ must bear the lashes against men who teach in His Sunday schools, yet go forth to pull shady tricks in business during the rest of the week. There are people who stand in the church and proclaim before the heavens the doctrine of charity, yet who wouldn't so much as contribute to flowers for a neighboring family that has lost a loved one.

If a minister or good church member becomes involved in a scandal, the sordid affair rates front-page publicity. Any one else could commit the same offense, yet get a notice no bigger than an obituary, and just as hard to locate in the papers. This in itself, is really a tribute to Christ. The fact that the world magnifies and is astonished at the shortcomings of Christians, is evidence that the world expects bigger things from them, than from itself. Christ's greatest tributes in His own day, were received from His enemies. The attachment of importance they placed on Christ, testified that He was no common man.

Still and all, why does the world not apply the same measure of lameness to other branches? Just because a church member slips now and then, is no criterion that all church people equally possess the same failing. Sometimes a banker is convicted of absconding funds, yet people do not wholesaley lose faith in banks. Once in a great while an athlete accepts a bribe, but the world doesn't desert patronage of the sport. A Benedict Arnold now and then betrays his flag,

but we don't brand all soldiers traitors on his account. You may some day bite into an apple that harbors a worm, but that comprises no license to forever cease eating apples. Before you condemn hypocrisy in Christianity, investigate Christ's own feeling towards it. Hypocrites assailed Him and eventually took His life. It is unfair that Jesus even today must still be hounded by them and be put to shame all over again for their misdeeds. If a man is a hypocrite, the church didn't make him one. He is probably hypocritical in all things: at home, among his friends, in business, and in pleasure. Be most assured, Christ did not make him one. Be further assured that Christ will do all in His power to prevent the man from remaining a hypocrite.

Once in awhile we meet a Christian who is repulsive to the man on the street. He collars people on the sidewalks, urges them to sign pledge cards, rants at the prevalence of vice, denounces cosmetics and fads, and embarrasses oftener than he helps. As you tear yourself away from such a man, you say to yourself, "I'd rather be a Mohammedan than be like him."

But let me say confidentially, Christianity is far bigger than this man suspects. Some minds hold just so much. You cannot put the ocean into a fishbowl. There is always more of Christ in the heart than there will ever be in the shoes. But before you hurl your invectives against this well-meaning disciple, ask yourself the question, "Am I doing as much?" Remember that the height of a Christian is not set by his stature, but by the stature of Christ. Look beyond this fellow and observe that broader class of Christians—the wheat, not the chaff.

As a rule, their word is gold. They are kindly and honest. They sacrifice without glory or thought of compensation. Yes, they have their faults; but let me say this. With them, crime is less extant; divorces are fewer, their lives are nobler. They are the people who support hospitals and civic drives.

No man in his right mind would want to live over a hundred miles from these people, because they stand for decency and morality.

One must always bear in mind, that a Christian is never a finished product; he is always in the making. When Raphael was asked which of his paintings was his greatest, he replied, "My next one." So, with the Christian; he is forever looking forward to new horizons and a better life. He dreams dreams and catches visions of a better world in which to live.

It seems pitiable that the rank and file of people have failed to subscribe to Christianity. As you evaluate the Man, you find that His appeal is limited to no one class of people, nor to any particular age. Childhood was immortalized by the story of the Nativity. His teachings have elevated the worth of children and He even appraised them as having the qualities necessary for entrance to the Kingdom.

Women are forever indebted to Christ, for it was He who raised them to a new plateau of worth. Before His entrance into the world, women were classified as chattels, held in economic and domestic bondage. But through His matchless love for them, He has succeeded in resurrecting them from pitiful obscurity into radiant glorification. Today, "Mothers' Day" would be empty without mention of Mary and Jesus.

Youth should be attracted to Christ because His entire ministry was spent as a young man. He understood its problems and transcended its temptations. He knew the resentments of age against youth, and understood that young people live in a world that demands challenge and daring.

Senility should warmly open its heart to Christ's message, because of all spiritual leaders, Christ alone offered reward and peace for the aged. His portrayal of heaven indicates that the tired pilgrims and weary warriors will find just recognition for their fidelity. Jesus honored the retrospection that older people love so well, and he honored the venerable faithfuls who face the twilight of life. And so, this

man Christ, has a message for every age and every human kind.

It seems incongruent that the Master should be so mercifully shunned by the masses and the classes. His life was a beautiful picture of unblemished character. Yet no man ever walked the face of the earth with less equipment and against greater impediments. He enjoyed no media of radio or telegraphy, nor even the printed page to disseminate His message. He had only a handful of crude, unschooled men to form the inner circle of companionship and assistance. Even these failed in the crisis. Of the twelve, only two could read and write—Matthew and Judas.

The disciples were timid, fearful, at times ostentatious, and uniformly small of faith. One was a born skeptic, another a perpetual braggard, and one a traitor. Yet with that imperfect circle as a nucleus, He ultimately transformed the minds and hearts of mankind. Jesus, moreover, was not blessed with longevity, having but three brief years in which to imbue the world with His program. Yet in that scant period, He accomplished more of good than all the reformers, martyrs, scientists, and humanitarianists combined. His life must be judged, not by the calendar, but by the heart. Christ implicitly believed in the ultimate goodness of things. Like His heavenly Father, Jesus knew that eternity was His. This helped compensate for the inequalities and injustices that earth had to sustain.

The Bible, though hundreds of years old, is still the youngest of books and as fresh as the newest blade of grass. Scholars and thinkers have turned from the musty pages of tradition and have eagerly devoured its truths. Lawyers, teachers, business-men, and educators, quote from its well to substantiate their dogmas. Knowledge of its pages, establishes one as a person of intellect. Through its pages, the weak have been made strong, the poor have inherited inward

wealth, the comfortless have found comfort, and the friendless befriended.

Jesus reached mankind by starting at this end. Most theologies begin with God and come down to man. Jesus got into His greatest difficulties with the Pharisees by presenting a new philosophy of man, not of God. His enemies weren't nearly as aroused over what He said about God, as about what He said concerning man. Jesus taught that the Prodigal Son had more right to the Kingdom of heaven than self-righteous priests. He held that prostitutes and thieves, beggars and adulterers had license to the Kingdom of God, along with other regenerated people. If Jesus had come only to help the saved, there would have been no occasion to perpetuate His church. But He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. And as long as there are lost sheep, there will always be a need of Him.

One of the things Christ endeavored to build, was size. The world has always paid tribute to bigness, but it was a different sort of magnitude than the type Jesus sought to create. If you are asked, "How big are you?" a number of answers unconsciously come to mind. You may ruminate to yourself that you are six feet tall, weigh one hundred and seventy pounds, and earn four thousand dollars a year. You further cite that you belong to a Kiwanis club, the Board of Education, a certain church, and that you own a home and an automobile. But all of this, while interesting, is much beside the point.

The bigness of which Jesus spoke, is measured in terms of living, giving, and forgiving. We have elsewhere dealt with the subject of giving. Many so-called philanthropists in reality give back more than they give away. True giving is never measured intrinsically. It is comparatively simple to throw your old coat at the feet of a tramp, or part with that article of rummage for which you have had no use in the past ten years. Real giving as Jesus defined it, implies self-denial

and cheerfulness of heart. That is what makes a child so precious. Regardless how much wealth a woman may possess, the law of sacrifice insists that she bring her little one into the world with the same travail and vicarious sacrifice as the poorest mother. God knows what sacrifice means. Did He not prevent Abraham from sacrificing his own son Isaac, and then in turn give His own Son to the world's cross?

We are familiar with the story of the hunter who was caught in the rain. To escape getting soaked, he sought refuge in a hollow log. As the downpour continued, the log swelled, and at length, the nimrod attempted futilely to squeeze free from his sheltering prison. As the thought of being trapped there, magnified into serious fear for his life, it brought eternity before his mind. He yelled desperately for help, but only empty silence was his reply. He cried in despair, with the thought of death mounting continually in his mind. He tried to justify himself and review the good things he had done in his time. As the story goes, he remembered having given a dime to church years ago when just a boy. The thought of it made him feel so small, he had no difficulty in crawling out of the log.

But what about that sensitive subject, Forgiveness? This bugbear seems to haunt many lives and cause endless heart-ache. The story of the father in the episode of the Prodigal Son, was intended by Christ to illustrate the forgiving nature of God. Despite that picture of the tenderness of the Father, willful mankind persists to be unforgiving in its own relationships. People should scarcely expect divine pardon in the day of judgment, when they have so brutally refused forgiveness to those who have asked it of them in life.

Any community is replete with dozens of cases of brothers, sisters, fathers, sons, friends, and relatives who dwell in a constant state of feuds with one another. In most every instance, the point at variance is pitifully trivial.

An old South Carolina judge who has tried thousands of cases, remarked in a recent article, that people will dig their own graves and eat out their hearts, merely for "the principle of the thing." He cited the case of two lifelong friends who were brought into his court swearing vengeance at each other. The question in dispute was simply an argument over a fifty cent piece. It seems the two men had been matching coins, and in the argument that ensued, their friendship went out the window. There they stood before a bar of justice, two fully grown men past middle age, cursing and deriding one another in legal battle, over a paltry fifty cents.

The venerable judge sighed as he reflected on the frailty of humankind. He uncovered case after case of the obstinacy of people to yield a point, however trivial, because of their unrelenting dogmatism.

Another litigation came about as the result of an automobile accident. It seems the two drivers who were approaching one another from opposite directions, both hugged the white dividing line in the center of the highway, neither making any overture to concede an inch. The inevitable result was a sorry collision which resulted in mutual losses to both men. Hospital bills, repair damages, and court costs were divided equally between the two. It was still the good old "principle of the thing." I remember having somewhere heard a poem on a safety poster which read:

"Now Jones was right,
As he motored along;
But he's just as dead
As tho he were wrong."

The case files of our several Bureaus of Missing Persons, give mute evidence of the sorry estrangements, suicides, and human depravities accruing from simple unforgiveness and stubbornness. Fathers have inexorably refused to accept wayward children back into the home. Next door neighbors

have become deadly enemies because of line fences or chickens in the garden. Husbands have brought divorce proceedings because of unwillingness to forgive the wife for having burned the toast. One could go on and on, multiplying cases —all of which point to this scarlet stain on the family apron.

Jesus found it in His heart to forgive those who crucified Him. How little we should feel for our petty headstrongness in refusing pardon for the trivial offenses made against us.

Henry Ward Beecher was a man who put Christian love into action. A man who used to openly condemn Beecher, later became his warmest friend. In explaining this newly acquired friendship, the man said, "If you want a favor from Beecher, kick him."

Stanton once called Abraham Lincoln a low, cunning clown and delighted in poking fun at his homeliness. When reading in the paper that explorers were searching in Africa for the missing link, Stanton exclaimed, "Why are they searching over in Africa for the missing link, when they can find him right out in Springfield, Illinois." Of course he referred to Lincoln, and the comment reached Lincoln. That taunt must have cut pretty deep in Lincoln's heart, but if it did, he didn't show it. The Great Emancipator was not one to hold a grudge or be offended by personal slander.

Years later, when Lincoln became President of the United States, he appointed that same Stanton to be a member of his cabinet. In that little room across from Ford Theatre where Lincoln was shot, it was Stanton who stood close to the bedside of our first martyred president, and as life slowly ebbed away, he said with tears in his eyes, "There lies the greatest ruler the world has ever seen. Now he belongs to the ages." Thus forgiveness brought its own reward.

Forgiveness is close to Godliness. It is human to sin, but divine to forgive. Christians need this kind of yardstick to measure their bigness. It is true that they will eternally be plagued by jeers and jibes from the jealous. From the time

a boy starts to Sunday school or church, he learns that he must bear ridicule from others. They tantalize him by calling him a sissy and Sunday school dandy. At times, it hurts to the quick; but when that boy grows to manhood and learns to evaluate true worth, he thanks God for the privilege of having borne those hurts in His name. Remember that "Jealousy is the tribute inferiority pays to worth."

John Burroughs, the eminent naturalist, had a way all his own, of meeting the assaults of non-believers and chronic offenders. He said he received that lesson from the birds. He observed that whenever a hawk was attacked by crows or kingbirds, it began to soar higher and higher, in preference to fighting a counterattack. At length, the hawk would have ascended so high in the skies, that the pursuant birds grew fearful and ceased the assault.

Burroughs philosophized that if only Christians would meet their opposition in like manner, it would make a tremendous difference. I think he has struck a fundamental Christian tenet. When we lower ourselves to retaliate, we become as petty as our critics. It is only by living above such a level, that we prove how big we really are. Christ dares a man to be that big.

One of the great secrets of Christian living is to take advantage of your handicap, and use it as a sceptre. Jesus was the supreme example of the triumph of courage over adversity. From the moment when the little Babe was laid in His squalid manger, His life was in jeopardy from a hundred sources. Even before His birth, His weary parents had to trudge from door to door, looking for a welcome haven of refuge. No room in the inn! That blight against humanity still continues to cause us remorse.

We see Paul bound in prison; yet through it all he saw farther than Nero. He saw beyond the hand that put him there. Was Paul Nero's prisoner? Listen to the apostle himself. "Therefore, being a prisoner of the Lord . . ." Paul

may have been on one end of a chain with Nero on the other, but Nero could never in a million years possess the soul of the great believer. Today, human values have been reversed and Paul has been justified. We are proud to call our sons "Paul" and our dogs "Nero."

Nero thought he robbed Paul of a congregation. He had him bound in shackles and thrown into isolated imprisonment. But in the doing, he provided him with an audience. Every six hours, a new guard came on duty. That meant four men every day, or a combined congregation of one hundred and twenty men per month. Better still was the fact that Paul's listeners couldn't get up and leave as one can if he doesn't like the church service. They were compelled to stay and hear what he had to say. In addition, Nero literally obliged Paul to write, for which the world is strangely indebted to Nero. The eminent first missionary hungered for contact with his churches and the faithful ones he had converted to the cause. The only means he had of talking to them was by way of the pen. And thus, through the handicap of prison, Paul wrote those immortal letters which the world can never forget.

Here is a little girl with a radiant spirit. She, too, is in prison, but of a different sort. Her father is an atheist, and her mother is a "now-and-then" Christian. The father's wrath is provoked when the church is mentioned. Yet scores of good people from the church call daily to see the little girl, for she is an invalid. They see her smiling face and take home more comfort than they bring. They leave that sick-room with sermons in their heart that the minister can never put on paper. The little girl thrills when they call, and sends her sunshine along with them. She, too, like Paul, is in prison; but she uses her imprisonment for God.

John Bunyan writes from Bedford Jail, "This prison has given me a great insight which I could never see outside." With that inspiration, he went to work and wrote "Pilgrim's

Progress," the moral masterpiece of the age. Yes, evil men can lock the bird in its cage, but the song gets out just the same.

Jesus knew that man was born to struggle. Perhaps that is why just now His church is facing such distressing ordeals. We can neither help nor hasten the coming of the beautiful by the intervention of force and hatred. Even now, while war clouds continue to darken the European continent, we hear so-called Christian pacifists say, "I'd like to bayonet that fiend Hitler, or plunge a dagger into Stalin's back." It was that inoffensive man of Galilee who said on one occasion, "All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword." The kingdom of heaven can't come that way.

The church in a sense is like a cocoon. It cannot be liberated by deliberately cutting the strands which bind it. If the church is to become a spiritual butterfly, it must work out its own salvation with the help and approval of God Almighty. Our eyes are weaker than an eagle's; our hearing is not as acute as a cat's; and none of us are as strong as a gorilla. Yet none of these can write a poem, paint a masterpiece, enjoy a sermon, or visualize an after-life. These shall all have passed away thousands of years while the human soul continues to emblazon eternity's road.

Many who denounce God, simply haven't tried Him. I recall a woman who got on a train with a heavy basket. She kept it on her lap, and quite frequently shifted under its weight. Finally a man stepped over and said, "Lady, why don't you set your basket on the floor? The train is able to carry you both." We see some people like that. They want to carry all the burdens of the world on their shoulders. If they only knew that God can help carry their burdens.

Either faith is a guiding light to our life or else it is a millstone about our necks. Will Durant in a recent article said: "Religion is born out of the needs of the soul. The soul won-

ders and searches. Pain, poverty, sorrow, and death—these will never be answered anywhere but in religion."

Thomas A. Edison, the immortal inventor, was asked one day what the next great invention would be? He replied: "I don't think the world will see too many great inventions until it catches up spiritually."

Faith has not lost its power. Christ has never been shorn of His glory. Our present day dilemma is a case of the church fighting itself. One recalls that General Stonewall Jackson was killed by his own men who fired on him by mistake. Sometimes the church threatens to commit suicide. Mahatma Ghandi at one time was a staunch Christian. He was converted by reading the New Testament while a student in London. Yet his faith was shattered by the constant warring of the London churches among themselves.

We must admit that Christianity can never fully be attained. The standard is so high that only the few even approach it. Nonetheless, there is no cause to lower it. Most of us know we can't live up to Christ. The backslider admits it; the hypocrite won't admit it; the Pharisee doesn't know it. Yet Christianity has produced great souls, and we dread to think to what levels of degradation they might have slipped, without it.

If Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago, I wonder how He now feels as He looks down upon the world today. In Moscow, churches have been converted into saloons and museums. In Berlin, the church has been rendered non-existent. Even in our own national capital where coins are printed bearing the motto, "In God we trust," legislators continue to solve problems without consulting God. Our state and municipal governments are stained with corruption and ungodliness. Respectable citizens wink at sinful conditions which threaten to ultimately undermine their own generation. It would seem that the church is strangely silent throughout it all. There was a time

in human history when the voice of the church meant something. Today if the church asserts any intention of helping to correct the evils of the hour, the cry of "Keep religion out of politics" rings through the air. Somehow, people have come to feel that religion is meant for the pulpit and the sickroom. They forget that Christianity is more of a way of life than a frozen tenet to be left on the printed page.

One of the most atrocious of current evils is the peril of indecision. The unhappiest man in the world is the man who can't make up his mind. If Elijah could return to earth, he would undoubtedly cry out again, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" In Elijah's time, the people were divided between God and Baal. In the New Testament, the struggle was between God and Mammon. Today, people are undecided whether to follow Christ or the world.

Man is something of a child, in that he always welcomes a short cut to ease. If he can take the elevator instead of having to use the stairs, so much the better. Our old world has been battered and beaten by conflicting doctrines and torn asunder by recurring problems. At the approach of each crisis, a new Moses always appears on the scene with a scheme to lead the people from their wilderness of despair. At various intervals, such prophets have offered Socialism, Communism, Nazism, share-the-wealth plans, chain letters, and even anarchy as a cure-all. Most of these bugaboos are old ghosts in new sheets. On paper, these plans sound half reasonable; but the chief fallacy is that they are devices of men, and not plans of God. Our own Federal Constitution was saved by utterly leaning on the everlasting arms. It was the aged Franklin who entreated the assemblage to look to God in prayer, at a time when it appeared compromise was doomed. With divine guidance, the day was saved, and a document was framed that even today stands sentinel to liberty and equality.

There is a propensity on the part of mankind to be a little half-and-half. He feels the moral urge to do right, but reserves license to cut capers now and then. He doesn't want to give up his old gang of friends, nor does he want to completely surrender his church affiliations. And so, the inescapable result is that he becomes an unhappy man. As a tramp once remarked to a lady who had asked him to work for his dinner, "Madam, I am an unhappy medium. I am too light for heavy work; and too heavy for light work." Such is the predicament of the undecided man. He won't wholeheartedly embrace Christianity, nor will he entirely abandon it. We call to mind the dilemma of the Irishman who built his home far out in the ocean, because he wanted to live close to America, yet didn't want to leave Ireland. In reality, he lived in neither country, even though he thought he was proximitous to both.

As a boy I vividly remember when a magician appeared on our school program. During the show, he called for someone from the audience to come to the stage and assist him. At length, a bright-faced lad responded, and felt pretty elated in being so honored. The magician handed the boy a metal ball of sizable proportions and of considerable weight, with the caution that under no circumstances should he let it fall. The lad firmly gripped the ball, keeping an eye on it and intermittently glancing at his friends in the audience. The magician appeared to be busying himself with the next illusion. Soon, however, the audience began to snicker, as it noticed the boy shifting from one foot to another. He was visibly quite uncomfortable for some reason. It soon became evident that the ball was getting hot. It was likely chemically treated to produce that effect. The hapless boy shifted the ball from one hand to another, and tried to hold it against his body. He looked pleadingly towards the magician who appeared to be preoccupied with something else. By this time the audience was nearly in hysterics. The poor little

fellow was afraid to let go, yet couldn't hold it much longer, with the increasing discomfort. Finally, when his capacity for toleration had been exhausted, he dropped the ball like a hot potato, and it struck the floor with a dull thud. The magician smiled at the expense of that perspiring red-faced boy.

That unforgettable experience often comes to my mind as I view professing church members who are placed under just such duress. They want to retain their church membership, and are afraid of the consequences should they drop it. Yet such an arrangement makes them most miserable. Their church affiliation, like that hot metal ball, causes them no end of embarrassment. Situations arise which humiliate them before their worldly friends, or disgrace them before their church friends. They find they cannot carry two pails of water without spilling some. At length they conclude that they have neither been good Christians nor happy pagans. In consequence, they either pursue the deeper life, or cast all care to the winds, and become fancy-free unbelievers.

Many church members of today don't mean to renounce Christ; they merely want to enjoy a few reservations. Like dogs in the manger, they don't want to occupy forever, yet refuse to relinquish their place, for fear they might not repossess it ~~so~~. Many people relish the end, but not the means to acquire it. Like the colored man who said, "Ah wants to be a ^NChristian; but ah dreads de process," the non-church-goer is afraid to smell the fragrance of the rose because of the thorns.

Still others do not point-blankly denounce Christ; they merely fail to accept Him. Their plight is best illustrated by the darky who owed another colored boy a dollar. When the debtor was confronted for payment, he was asked, "Brudda, does yo' refuse to pay me dat dolla?" His answer was, "No suh, ah don't refuse; ah just refrains." And so, a host of people don't refuse Christ; they just refrain from accepting Him.

An old carpenter once remarked, "There are four kinds of things in the world, and only one of them is any business of mine: (1) Things that never get out of repair. I needn't worry my head about them; (2) Things that can't be repaired. It is futile to waste time on them; (3) Things that if given a fair chance, will repair themselves; and (4) Things that will go from bad to worse unless somebody repairs them. These are the things that merit my attention, and are definitely my business."

The old man was right, and his words take on added meaning when we consider that Jesus was also a carpenter, whose job was to mend broken people. Think about it for a moment. In the first class are stars, moon, sun, seasons, and rain—things that never have to be oiled or repaired. Besides, there are no engineers brilliant enough if anything ever did happen to them. In the second class are the things that once broken, can never be repaired. In Jewish wedding ceremonies, the Rabbi breaks a wineglass to illustrate that the sacred bond of marriage, once violated, can never be restored as it was. In the third class, under things which, if given fair chance, will repair themselves, we find wounds, broken bones, shattered nerves, worry, etc. If given reasonable help and a little care, nature will do the healing. No doctor can cure a broken nervous system. He may prescribe that the patient go to a different climate or absent himself from familiar sights; but the actual machinery of repair is in the hands of God. But under the label of the fourth class, lies the program of the church. Unless the church acts and with promptitude, conditions may grow from bad to worse. The church should serve as a brotherhood to keep international friendships in a state of repair.

Back in the Gospel of Luke, the fifth chapter and second verse, are these words: "And saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets." Notice that the disciples were washing

their OWN nets. There have been too many people washing your net and mine for too many years, when their own could have stood a little ablution. Peter said to Christ, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." Perhaps with us in the church, our nets are too obstructed with our own imperfections, to allow many outsiders to be attracted. We can begin mending the nets of the world, as soon as our own have been washed and repaired.

There is another consideration along this line that would do well for us to mention, and that is the question, "Is the Church basking or tasking?" We earlier conceded that the church has come far in its struggle. We acknowledge its progress and its achievements. But I wonder, somehow, if we are not suffering from the languor that comes with spiritual coasting. Show me a church that is heavily in debt, beset with many problems, yet optimistic and uncomplaining; and I'll show you one that is busiest and most spiritual. On the other hand, point me to a church that is financially independent, inclined to feel self-satisfied and indifferent, and I'll point you to one that is spiritually dead.

The church of today often delights in recounting its bitter struggles, but rests at the oars in the present storm. Many a boy who had an illustrious father, thinks he can glide through life on the father's faith and reputation. A chapel speaker once told us in college, "People who brag about their ancestors are like potatoes; the best part of them is underground." Yes, the past is good enough to learn by; but not good enough to live by.

We have heard old tars tell about their adventuresome sea experiences. These venerable men of the sea have grown to relish their narratives to such an extent, they no longer care to feel the salt-spray lash against their cheek. They now prefer to talk about days gone by. The church must ever bear in mind that new worlds are never discovered in the harbor.

Perhaps we are growing decadent for want of some fiery challenge to unite our forces. Mutual foes create unanimity. Nature tells us that the tree strikes its roots deeper on the side where the wind blows the fiercest. The animal has the thickest fur where the cold strikes the keenest. Lotus-eaters make interesting poetry; but Pilgrim Fathers make robust nations in history.

The church must not bewail the seeming inefficacy of its present soldiers. There is nothing impossible if there exists conviction and the will to conquer. Macaulay describes how the armies of England were led by an "asthmatical skeleton" and the hosts of France by a hunchback dwarf. Spinoza, one of the world's greatest thinkers, was dying of consumption. And the man who first carried the cross to the Roman world and planted it at last in the capital—the most profound of all theologians and bravest of missionaries—was all his life a chronic invalid and martyr to an incurable disease.

But poverty, not wealth, is the mother of genius. Spenser died in want of bread, but wrote "The Fairie Queene" during his struggle. Christ never made the path easy. He never deluded His disciples about the price they would have to pay. He warned them that they could not sneak into heaven through a back door, but would have to enter through the straight gate that leads from the narrow road. The path of ease is too likely to discourage the path of duty. The doctor who becomes rich, is more apt to improve his golf game than the health of his patients. The schoolteacher who inherits a sudden fortune, may suddenly announce that her doctor advises an ocean voyage. The minister who stumbles into quick financial security, may simultaneously develop a serious throat disorder that curtails further preaching.

The church must not complain if it is undermined, tempted, ridiculed, or lied about. All these are tributes to its worth. One never bothers to slander a tramp. Desert sands are seldom plundered, for little of worth can be found

there. The tree with the largest and juiciest apples, has the most clubs in it.

A band of Apache Indians once captured the safe of a paymaster in a western town during frontier days. It contained some \$7,000 in bills, weighed four hundred pounds, and operated with a combination. The ignorant Indians knew nothing of the mechanics of the safe, and sought to open it by violence. They pounded off the knob with stones, struck it with tomahawks, roasted it in fire, threw boulders at it, and finally rolled it down a mountain where it landed in a river. After nearly a month of futile operation, they gave up in disgust. Over a year later, when peace had been established with the Indians, the government recovered the safe. To their great surprise, the safe was opened, and despite its severe treatment, yielded the money secure and intact from any damage.

In much the same light, the church has been assailed by savages through the years. It has been beaten and clubbed. Yet, despite the assailments through the centuries, the real treasure of Christianity has survived and emerged unscathed. As Socrates cried to his captors, "You can take my body and burn it, but you can't have me." The church also has an inner spark of life that cannot be subdued. For every martyr whose blood has sprinkled the earth, a thousand have sprung up to take his place.

If Christianity has failed to measure up to its standards, it is because the individual has failed. Mankind is prone to point the finger of blame at organizations rather than at the individual. Religion, if it does anything at all, affects the individual. There is no such thing as mass salvation. The great task of the church is to reach the man in the midst of a crowd. The minister who has a congregation numbering into the thousands, has a real task on his hands. A crowd has to be moved and convicted. As a crowd, it has no heart, no conscience, and no soul to be saved. The man

who attempts to preach to a crowd, succeeds only insofar as he is able to disentangle the individual from the mass.

Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, and Moody all knew how to preach to crowds. They ignored the assemblage itself. Of course they welcomed the sight of many faces, just as a fisherman delights to see a school of fish. But in both cases, the density merely means a multiplied opportunity to reach one at a time in rapid succession. Those great men of God delivered their messages in such a way that every listener felt that he was sitting there all alone.

John Nelson, a stone mason, said of Wesley: "When Wesley stroked his hair and fixed his eyes, I seemed to melt under the power. His words made me tremble. I thought he spoke to no one but me; but I dared not look, for I imagined that all the people were looking at me too."

Edward Payson tells how on one stormy night, he came to church to find one sole hearer. He preached his sermon just the same, as though the building was thronged. Some months later, that solitary audience called on him. He said to the minister, "I was led to the Savior through that service. For whenever you talked of sin and salvation, I glanced around to see who you meant; but I found there was no one else there but myself. I had no choice, but to lay every word on my heart and conscience."

The world needs to have the grace to ask, "Lord, is it I?" The story of missionary progress is the story of convert meeting convert, of tribe persuading tribe. The whole crux of missionary history lay in the ability of the missionary to reach the heart of one individual. If a man can be made to see himself as the offender, repentance is not far behind.

We remember how King David had cast his eyes so fondly on the wife of Uriah. The king resolved that the husband must be eliminated. Accordingly the man was commanded to take his place in the front line of battle, where he was killed in action. The king then proceeded to take the wife

for his own. Nathan approached David and related a parable of a rich man who had many flocks, and of a poor man who had but one ewe lamb. A stranger came to the rich man's gates, and so the host took the poor man's lamb rather than one from his own flock. When David heard the story, he waxed angry, and exclaimed that the rich man should surely die for such a sin. Then Nathan looked David squarely in the face, and said, "Thou art the man!" It was a personal message of conviction. The world today needs that kind of straightforwardness.

The history of religion is a chronicle of personal realization of sin. Elijah faces Ahab. Paul preaches to Felix. Savonarola frowns on Lorenzo the Magnificent. Latimer denounces Henry VIII, and John Knox hardens against the tears of Queen Mary. In each case, eternal issues were at stake. Each thrust was designed to invoke self-discovery and an awareness of personal blindness.

A clearer conception of God is the thing to be desired if the church is to flourish. It is amazing how little we know of the God we seek to glorify. Alfred Tennyson, the immortal poet, expresses through his memorable poem "Crossing The Bar," his soul's chiefest desire. The longing of that great master of verse, was to see God face to face.

Not so long ago, in one of our leading theological seminaries a questionnaire was submitted to the students, asking for their conception of God. One doesn't expect very concise answers from children on this subject, but from young men and women of college age, a plausible comprehension should be forthcoming. But the unexpected results from this survey revealed a woeful ignorance of youth at large, as to the character of God and His kingdom.

One young man visualized God as being a powerful monstrosity with crimson wings and fearful horns. He was pictured as perched on a magnificent white throne with fire belching from his nostrils. The rank and file of the replies

received, indicated conceptions of God leaning more along the line of a huge, omnipotent animal, than of a loving Father.

We are inclined to share the belief that these youth are not to be too harshly held amenable for such distorted notions. The smatterings of theology they possess, have undoubtedly been gleaned from their parents and from fragmentary sources of reading and conversation.

What then, can we know of God? Surely an answer to this question is imperative if we are to improve the church that purports to lead men to Him.

Since no man has actually beheld the face of God, how shall we think of Him? In the first instance, since man is created in the image of God, he must also be in possession of many Godly virtues. Perhaps the best avenue of approach to the image of God is through an analysis of the qualities that make up His being. We know first of all, that God is life. In Him we live and move and have our being. God one day breathed into the nostrils of man and made him a living spirit. It therefore follows that if God be the author of life, man also is legatee to that life. There will forever be a chasm of distinction between animate man and inanimate lesser creations.

Looking a bit further, we notice that God is love. The presence of all love in the world, is therefore traceable to Him. The unseen ties that unite husband and wife in affection, mother and son in devotion, brother and sister in unity, are inspired and nurtured by eternal God. Love is one of the those "know-so" legacies that we find difficult to prove, yet comparatively easy to accept. The gift of love cannot be weighed, put into a test tube, measured, or X-rayed, yet it has been mother to life's finest emotions and most sacrificial deeds.

Again, God is light. Light, without which all life would perish, is defined the simplest as "the absence of darkness."

Christ reestablishes that God is the Father of its genesis when He said of Himself, "I am the light of the world;" and again when He said of us, "Ye are the light of the world." Surely light, in any of its untold ramifications, is the forerunner of all progress and moral stability.

We would continue the enumeration of Godly traits: God is good; God is kind; God is just; God is merciful. All these and more help us understand His nature and disposition.

Yet to the majority of people, God is unknowable. He remains a constant mystery. The minister or the church that tries to expound God without experimental knowledge of Him, is as ineffective as the bachelor who tries to write a discourse on "How to Raise the Child."

Our finite minds are scarcely equal to the gigantic task of fully comprehending God. As one stands at the foot of Niagara or becomes lost in the sands of Sahara, the de-emphasis of man lowers the value of a human life. When we try to fathom the eternities and apprehend the mysteries of the heavens, we become veritably dazed.

If the sun were proportioned to the size of a tennis ball, the earth could be represented by a grain of sand twenty-three feet away. If these two objects were placed at New Orleans, Louisiana, the nearest star, reduced to the same scale, would be another tennis ball, as far distant as Duluth, Minnesota.

Or, to state our ignominious relationship to the infinities in another scale, let us use this comparison: If a child had an arm long enough to extend from the earth to the sun, and could feel with the same rapidity of sensation as when it placed its finger on a hot stove, that same child could touch the sun and not feel the heat from it until it was one hundred and fifty years old.

At the Adler Planetarium I gazed through a giant telescope to capture the optical photograph of a star that naked eye had never beheld. The great light from that star reflected

a sweeping of brightness as if the brush of heaven had painted a brilliant daub in the sky. But while gazing intently at this bewildering phenomena, I noticed what seemed to be thousands of minute specks or little dots surrounding it. I inquired what they were, and this is the answer the astronomer in charge gave: "Those are stars, most all of which are the size of the sun and larger. The nearest one to earth is eighteen billion miles. The light from that closest one required a time of three years to reach the earth." I tried to remember the speed of light from my elementary Physics—186,000 miles per second—as he continued: "The light from the Pole star took forty years to reach us, while there are others whose light began speeding towards the earth at the time of creation, and have not reached us yet."

Listen to me, if you live in a universe surrounded by thousands of stars larger than the sun, which to us through the telescope, appear no larger than pinpoints, you need a God as big as the universe. One muses with the Psalmist, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?"

The church must remember that its God transcends the boundaries of physical limitations, yet is close enough to hear the lamentations of the bleeding heart. The same God who controls the heavenly bodies in their orbits, can speak peace to the sin-ridden soul in contrition.

There are people who continue to think of heaven in terms of length and breadth. It is little wonder that they are so perplexed by the geometry of heaven. Not so long ago, in one of the daily featured cartoons, a well-known illustrator drew a miniature scale of heaven, adding the opinion that if all the people who have lived and died, actually merited the heavenly reward, the gates of heaven couldn't contain them all.

Just for curiosity, let us weigh that speculation. It has been variously estimated that approximately twenty billion people have lived and died. In addition, there are nearly two

billion people now living. Let us be generously fanciful, and concede that as many more will come into the world as there are living and dead at the present time. That would make a combined total of forty-four billion persons. Let us be still more generous and add another six billion for good measure. Now if it were possible to transpose humanity from one place to another, we could place the entire fifty billion people in the one state of Texas, and each would have one hundred forty-seven square feet of land per capita. Yet some worry about heaven's housing problem.

Another problem that hounds the church and causes it much obstruction, is the question of the Holy Spirit. Grown people refer to this member of the Holy Trinity without the slightest conception of its meaning. It has been simple to picture Christ in the mind, because He came to earth in bodily form and tasted the same circumstances that still confront people today. Christ is not so difficult to accept, because He is a historical reality. But when the minister pronounces the benediction, and dismisses a congregation in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I wonder what meaning that latter member of the divine triumvirate carries to the individual.

Jesus had a heart-to-heart talk with His disciples that last night in the upper room. He spoke about One who was to take His place. He called Him the Comforter. Christ, cognizant of the physical impossibility of ministering to all peoples simultaneously, while in bodily form, made provision by which He could transcend these limitations and be a universal Christ. By the transformation of His being, He would then be able to caress the fevered brow of a boy in Armenia, speak words of comfort to a bereaved widow in China, receive the heart of a penitent soul in Argentina, and simultaneously strengthen the faith of a weary pilgrim in the United States.

The solution to this problem of world-wide ministering was accomplished through the person of the Holy Spirit. Through this misunderstood being of the Trinity, Christ took on omnipresence. Through the Comforter, He now could be present in every prayer service, stand at every bedside, breathe comfort at every grave, and provide a blanket of protection for the entire world.

Consider that little girl standing on the curb in one of New York City's most traffic-ridden streets. Her arms are full of bundles and she wants to get across the street. Big cars and trucks whirl by, horns and sirens shriek—the jam seems endless. Suddenly a big policeman walks to her side, just as she had burst into tears. He takes her tiny hand with one strong arm, and with the other, carries her packages. Right through the midst of the traffic they walk; big cars come to a stop as these two safely make their way to the other side. Now she is safely across, and soon she will be home. Physically, she was just as helpless on one side of the street as the other. But now the tears are gone, her face has captured its smile, and she happily proceeds on her way home. That policeman, for the moment, was her comforter.

Here is a boy in school, puzzled over a sum that won't come out right. His brow is knitted with worry, and he feels the humiliation of being bested by his schoolmates. Suddenly he looks up and sees the teacher at his side. At first, her appearance makes him feel uneasy. He squirms and feigns study, but teacher knows better. She sympathetically leans over and says, "Let's see now. Did you subtract this?" With welcome relief, his face beams, and he says, "Oh, I see it now. I forgot all about that." With a little timely help, the boy works out his own exodus. But to him, that teacher had been a real comforter.

Back in the Old Testament, we read the story of a great journey of a cavalcade of people from Egypt to Palestine. The sojourn stretched in serpentine trails over tractless

wastes, infested with snakes, scorpions, and all manners of peril. It winded through impenetrable wilderness and desert dunes. During that itinerary, a motley mob of four million people was transformed into an organization. What was the secret of that miraculous march? Merely that God went with them in person through every peril. He accompanied them in a cloud by day and in fire by night. He kept in constant touch with Moses, their leader. Throughout the dreary duration of hunger and thirst, rebellion and despair, He was their unseen, silent partner. If you leaf through the pages of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, you discover over twenty different occasions on which God's timely help was made real.

God's plan for the winning of the world is practically the same as it was for the care and guidance of the Children of Israel through the wilderness. In that day, a tent was erected, and twice God filled it with glory. Even Moses was restricted from entering. There was no mistake about the spirit of God, for they never knew from day to day what would happen next. God consoled them with the promise that they would be fed, clothed, and protected. They trusted Him, and He reciprocated with daily manna and quail. The rock in Horeb gushed forth with sparkling water to banish their thirst. God, to that people, was a real companion.

The church, in a word, is devoid of power, because it hasn't learned to make a friend of the Holy Comforter. We fail to see the heart and mind of God back of the Holy Spirit. As you visualize George Washington, going to a little chapel to pray, on the morning before the battle of Valley Forge, you understand his subsequent victory.

As I stood in the Edison Museum and gazed at the sleigh which carried the Father of Our Country to and from church, I wondered to myself if that silent, unheralded devotion and dependence of his on Almighty God, is not the prototype for our pattern today.

Those long, sleepless nights which Abraham Lincoln spent, pacing up and down the corridors of the White House, during those dark days of the Civil War, explain why the "house divided against itself" did not fall. It was Lincoln's simple communion with God, the Comforter, that contributed much to our country's durability.

As Jesus took leave of the world, He sensed the vacancy that would exist in the hearts of His beloved; and so He said, "I am going away; but I will send another, the Holy Ghost, who will be to you, all that I have been, and more." If the church would only take Christ at His word, it could once again lift its head and regain its lost sovereignty.

“DIAGNOSIS”

By

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IT is not easy to diagnose the cause of the sickness of Protestantism today. Several things probably contribute to its weakened condition.

1. There is too much tendency on the part of many to get away from the Bible, regarding it simply as a man-made Book, and to dwell too confidently in the realm of the experience-centered. Churches that grow and people who live the best life are the ones who stand upon the proposition that the Scriptures have been given by inspiration and constitute the Word of God and become our rule of faith and practice.
2. Without the Divinity of Christ there can be no Christianity. Everything must be Christocentric. There is no way of accounting for Jesus Christ except through the Scriptural teaching that He is “The Only Begotten Son of God.” He was the legal son of Joseph but the “Only Begotten Son of God.” Any attempt to get away from His Divine leadership leads to defeat.
3. Evangelism is imperative if the Church is to go forward. The Great Commission lays upon the heart and shoulder of Christian people the obligation to evangelize. We must “teach or tarnish, preach or perish, evangelize or fossilize.”
4. Church attendance is essential. This is necessary both for the individual's growth and for the onward going of the church. Only 43 per cent of the membership of the Protestant

Churches of the United States attend services. One of the needs of the hour is for church membership to take the road that leads to worship. One should worship that he may be prepared to serve, and where there is no worship, there is not much service to be found.

5. The Lord prayed, before going away, for the unity of all believers. That prayer has not fully been answered. Unity is essential to the end that the world may believe that Jesus Christ was sent of God. In unity there is strength. A divided Church is impotent to save the world. The challenge to the world-wide conquest in the name of Christ can be met when Christians unite and the Church puts forth a solid front, as it did in the first century, before divisions were known. The slogan should be, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."

"DIAGNOSIS"

*"And so when raging fever burns,
We shift from side to side by turns;
And 'tis a poor relief we gain,
To change the place but keep the pain."*

—Watts.

I HAVE in my files, a letter written to me by General Smedley D. Butler, at a time when I was supervising the compilation of biographies for a little volume entitled "Famous Living Personalities." Since General Butler's biography appeared in the collection, he wrote a word of acknowledgment. I want to quote, in part, what that military expert had to say. The excerpt reads, "In perusing the various personalities which are in leadership today, you will find how really little there is, worth the attention of modern youth, except perhaps as a warning. I am one of those who considers that our generation has made a terrible mess of the affairs of our great land; but I do have confidence that the youth of our country, if they can be awakened to the insincerity and unconcern of our people generally, can save the situation."

What General Butler said about our country applies most applicably to the status of our churches and the people who gather under their wings. The writer has elsewhere made the allusion that the church is not only a lost traveler, but a sick patient as well. In the light of this condition, we are going to be doctors for the moment, and try to diagnose his ills. It may necessitate a blood test, the application of the stethoscope to his failing heart; or even submission to an X-ray. But come what may, we owe it to the patient and those who have interest in him, to seek out any findings that may help throw light on his chance for recovery, and the es-

tablishment of an effective treatment. Let us hope our friend, the church, will not, as Franklin did, "find the medicine worse than the malady."

Le Sage once said, "Facts are stubborn things." Yet Christ exhorted us to face them, for He said, "Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Let us then, undergo a factual X-ray, and learn the truth.

According to the latest statistics available from the findings of "The American Annual of 1939" we uncover some impressive figures which describe better than opinions, the real plight of the church.

The total membership of churches in the United States was set at 64,156,895 members, of which number 52,319,579 are above the age of thirteen years. On the face of it, this doesn't sound so degenerating, but there are hidden facts which qualify these figures tremendously. One statistician reports that "only six per cent of our nation attend services on Sunday morning, and two per cent on Sunday evening. About forty per cent of the American people are on church registers, but only twenty-nine per cent ever attend church. Among 13,000,000 Negroes in America, 7,000,000 are unchurched. There are 250,000 unchurched people of all races in Pittsburgh; 400,000 in Cleveland; 300,000 in St. Louis; 250,000 in Seattle; 425,000 in San Francisco; 1,000,000 in Los Angeles; and 4,000,000 in New York City. The unchurched in New York City alone equal the combined population of Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico.

Yes, it is true, that if all the people in the United States decided to go to church on a given Sunday, our churches could not hold them.

While we are not so particularly interested in the size of the church throughout the world, let us nevertheless, take a peek at people in other lands, and among other religions, and observe what they believe.

There are 331,500,000 Roman Catholics over the world; 144,000,000 Orthodox Catholics; and 206,900,000 Protestants. All of these can be listed together as Christian people, and aggregate a total of 682,400,000 people, or slightly over a third of the total population of the world at large.

On the other side of the ledger, we discover the imposing figure of 1,166,785,359 non-Christians, representing seven major groups of religious bodies, in addition to a miscellaneous group which either make no profession or defy classification. The leading non-Christian faiths are broken down into the following proportions: Jews—15,315,359; Mohammedans—209,020,000; Buddhists—150,180,000; Hindus—230,150,000; Confucionists and Taoists—350,600,000; Shintoists—25,000,000; Animists—135,650,000; and Miscellaneous—50,870,000.

If Christiantiy is to one day dominate the world, the appraising eye can readily detect what a staggering task is yet ahead. While the program of Christ has spread contagiously over the earth, there still remains unconquered, nearly two-thirds of the world's population.

The gigantic undertaking of evangelizing the world for Christ can more graphically be grasped by reducing the picture to an understandable program of objective, time, and units to be won. To be specific, if all the forces of the church could be concertedly united, and could succeed in converting 1,000,000 non-believers a year to Christianity; even if no more were born, it would take 1,166 years to do the job. This roughly provides the reader with the magnitude of the task. Moreover, at the present rate of conversion, and being obliged to make allowance for an ever increasing birth-rate, even the time calculated above, would have to be extended to materialize the attainment.

But since our chief interest centers itself on the scene at home, let us return from the world-wide arena to the domestic dilemma. There are some 248,410 churches in the

United States, representing over 200 different religious bodies. In doctrine and polity, they differ widely, sometimes even diametrically clashing. Strange as it seems, none of these branches represents a united front, yet each purports to be striving towards the same goal. Some of our denominations have flatly declined overtures of cooperation, on the grounds that they alone are in possession of the "one true light," and any departure from their tenets of conviction would be tantamount to violation of God's special faith in them. Other groups are as adamantly dogmatic in their views. A few bodies are lukewarm to unity programs; others are keen for them; and so it goes, each possessing a different label and conflicting conviction.

But whether the churches generally like to accept it or not, the fact remains that they have common enemies, and mutual objectives, even though their concepts of reaching them, may radically disagree.

When the church is assailed, the stones of rebuke break windows in the small church as well as the cathedral. If times persist in being as hectic and devoid of morality as they appear to be at the moment, every church, however widely it may differ in belief, will feel the repercussion. As I see it, the lethargy of churches towards fighting a common foe, is comparable to the refusal of a company of soldiers to fight against an enemy attack, for the reason that their guns are not all the same size, and their uniforms are not perfectly matched.

Dr. James Rowland Angell, President of Yale University, recently said in a baccalaureate address: "I share with many others far wiser, the feeling that our world has today no greater need than a vigorous revival of true religion, one in which every class and every community should share." Men in all professions, from Roger Babson, the eminent statistician, to Ohio's oldest active minister, have been echoing the same sentiment.

To be frank, the church must recognize that the schemes of the nations and politicians have utterly failed. People would listen to the church speak, if it had one voice, and could speak with authority. Civilization is saturated with the claptrap of brainstorms and cure-alls. They are untrusting of the pseudo leaders who tell them there is bread on every hand, when they know their stomachs bear a different testimony.

What the church doesn't seem to realize, is that their hour has struck. History has provided religion a few salient opportunities to make a triumphant entry, and just now, history repeats itself. If the people who comprise the churches over our land, fail to act, they will be dirging with Browning, "This could have happened once, And we missed it, lost it forever." People everywhere have admitted defeat. The necessity of the intervention of Christ is doubly magnified by the utter futility of so many panaceas that have zoomed like skyrockets, beginning in the gutter, and ending there.

Twenty-five years ago, we were boasting that civilization had really returned. It was common in those days to hear from press and pulpit, that world peace had actually arrived, never again to be broken by a war of any great consequence. Education was the "favorite son" remedy for the banishment of the prevailing ills of mankind. The "New Theology" denied the inspiration of the Scriptures, and laughed at the need of a Christian way of life. The rule of gold displaced the Golden Rule. In the name of modern scholarship, this new theology was christened as the dawning day of religion into a new order. Those were days of super-optimism.

But after twenty-five years, that picture has been changed. The World War, with its heinous destruction and wanton disregard of the value of a human life, poisoned the thinking of people into new channels. As an aftermath, the baptism of blood was forgotten in the advent of unprecedented pros-

perity. The "gold-dust storm" helped heal many old wounds, and erase unpleasant memories. In the orgy of spending that followed, inflation stepped in, prices hit the ceiling, and people generally "sold their inheritance for a mess of porridge." But before anyone could rush to its assistance, the airplane of prosperity went into a tailspin, and collapsed into the direst depression the world had ever known.

The depression which followed, might have sobered this generation to humility and returned them to God, BUT IT DIDN'T. And for that reason, the church remains as the last vestige of hope. If it can speak now with clarion forcefulness and authority, the day may yet be saved. Consequently, the hour has arrived in which the forces of morality must join hands or forever after hold their peace. The church need not despair for want of weapons. As Shakespeare said in Henry VI: "A staff is quickly found to beat a dog." Prosperity makes friends, but adversity tries them. So now, the acid test will prove what kind of friends churches can be with one another.

Returning to the workbench of the church, let us peruse the tools we have at hand. The old historic denominations are still showing signs of life, and the smaller ones are wiggling as best they can; but the finest energies of power too frequently flow around and over them, rather than through them. With all the prestige and pomp of the larger bodies, none as yet evidence signs of ability to absorb the rest. Nor on the other hand do any of them intend to retire from the King's Business.

Doctor Faunce, former President of Brown University, forcibly related an experience which jolted the contrast between old channels and new, better than opinions could express it. He relates: "I was journeying through the cathedral towns of southern England, and had just attended the venerable service of "evening prayer" in the cathedral of Ely, where noble architecture, clear-voiced choir, and stately pro-

cession, combined to hush the soul in awe and worship. It was uplifting and memorable, yet not more than twenty persons were present, scattered through the majestic nave. As we emerged into the twilight, we heard the beating of a big drum and strident voices struggling to keep the pitch of a martial tune. There before us on the cathedral green stood a detachment of the Salvation Army, breaking all laws of harmony and rhetoric, but with a larger congregation and far greater moral passion than we had found within the noble cathedral behind us. Why must those simple men on the village green ignore the venerable church in order to fulfill their mission? Why could not a Christian church find a place for the superb organizing genius of William Booth and his gifted family? Why in America and England are millions of Christians habitually going outside the church to perform the Christian task?"

The Young Men's Christian Association in this country is one of the most effective organizations the world has ever seen. To those who hope for the spread of Christian principles to our cities, its growing strength is encouraging. The organization is vigilantly on the watch for promising young men from schools and colleges to occupy its positions. Yet, no minister or layman can view the far-reaching borders of this body without asking "Why?" Why must all this splendid passion for the saving and moulding of human life be diverted from church channels and made to flow through a novel society created for that purpose? Disloyalty to the church is not the answer, for people who are disloyal to one group would carry over their infidelity to another; and the history of the Y. M. C. A. disproves that. Was it then due to the narrow concept churches held regarding their mission, or too much fear for one another to cooperate, or too rigid adherence to outmoded methods, or too little space for original minds in which to develop?

In former days, lepers were cleansed, blind and deaf were healed, and the poor were fed and sheltered. These evidences asserted that the Kingdom was near at hand. But today, Christianity has been stripped of the task and credentials which once were its pride and joy. The prodigious growth and expansion of modern charities have instituted a fine network of supplementing agencies which have taken over the task once assumed by the church as its mission. Case workers, district nurses, clinics, tuberculosis societies, service clubs, community chests, public doctors, welfare societies, public relations boards, benefit funds, and vocational guidance counsellors have replaced the help once given by the church. In days gone by, people took their problems to the minister; today, they take them to a radio program. The logical thinker says, "If the city and state will be responsible for these things, why should the church be longer burdened with them?" But supposing the church loses its burden, will it also lose its mission? We must ask ourselves whether the church is merely being relieved of its functions in the humanitarian program, or if it is rather being discharged from service.

The pitiful but truthful answer seems to be that people are everywhere deserting the church, because they no longer find the answers to life and its problems, within its portals. The vital issues of a changing life are not being discussed in the church. In consequence, people, though as hungry as ever, are literally obliged to seek the haven of hospitals, charities, leagues, colleges, and the world of periodicals to find their menus for starving souls.

A handful of enterprising men have rallied to meet this need. Even old-fashioned "tracts" are enjoying wide circulation. Most of the popular magazines are including space for religious discussions. Quite a few have held contests to learn what people think in this present era of the church and its future. The most successful novels in the past five years

have dealt with struggles of the soul, and have found unbounded welcome by the teeming millions of people who are alive to the message. Our finest sermons are not being preached from the pulpits these days, but from the printed page of men such as Dr. Lloyd Douglas, A. J. Cronin, Sholem Asch, and countless others. Look if you will at the list of books enjoying the widest circulation and you will discover books like "Grapes of Wrath" and "The Nazarene" which dare to strike at subjects and interest, upon which the church has too long been silent. We from within, have no license to undermine the success of men who meet the challenge which we refuse.

The reason why the church is so often sidetracked to allow the swifter trains to go flying by, lies deep and cannot be removed by small measures. The vital difficulty is not that the church is divided, but that it is divided on the wrong principle. Denominationalism, whatever its defects, is not to blame; for as long as there are historic movements and different temperaments among people, there will be varieties in religious thinking. Even if all men could be combined into one massive, homogeneous body, thinking alike and worshiping en masse, a solid block of orthodoxy and conformity would result, from which the world would gain little and lose much. The trouble is not that we have divisions, but that those we have are too often unchristian and irreconcilable. Many of us know it is sometimes easier to share the views of men outside our own church than it is within. The foreign missionary movement began, not by persuading any church to begin, but by selecting like-minded people from all churches, and banding them together in little mission groups. In like manner, the Y. M. C. A. found its power, not in securing the endorsement of any denomination—which would be difficult even now—but in soliciting from many churches those filled with harmonious zeal for the elevation of young manhood.

Whatever indictment you hurl at these outside agencies, it cannot be denied that they do provide an effective channel for the outlet of sincere passion that apparently finds no expression through traditional methods. If a half dozen men desire to furnish aid to unguided boys, and keep them off the streets at night, they may find it impossible to accomplish their purpose through the divided churches of the town. One church may heartily endorse such a philanthropic venture, while another may deem it wholly secular. If a minister is to be regimented to direct the work, from which denomination shall he be selected? Which church building should be chosen from which the program can be instituted? If the boys are to be instructed to observe a worship program, which form of worship shall be observed? And should the boys afterwards become church members, which church shall they join? In hundreds of instances, these hurdles have stymied the aspirations of fine Christian men.

An opposite course has been tried, namely by a designated church accepting the sponsorship, but with the stipulation that all who benefit or participate must become subjective to the authority of the church in control. This plan is at present being put to use by many of our larger religious bodies, and in some cases, partial success has been enjoyed.

But in our wiser moments, we reflect that ecclesiastical authority finds it impossible to produce uniformity. There is nothing that a church dreads more today than a trial for heresy. In consequence, the mighty Church of England has become liberal to the extent of permitting distinctions of views which we might interpret as "high," "low," or "broad." Authority, to be true, is often efficient, but it is fatal to freedom and honesty, and may one day reap a harvest of lip-worshippers and heart-dissenters.

Some have contended that the true basis for Christian unity is intellectual conformity. As Christ presented the word "believe," it carried not only an invitation to give as-

sent of the intellect, but the consent of the whole personality. It never means acceptance of a proposition, but always devotion to a personal cause.

Agreement under intellectual unity, often comes at a high price. When a young ministerial student enters the seminary to find that his opinions have already been formulated, and that he is merely handed a rubber stamp, he is in a pitiful condition. He can survey the field of unfettered thought, but he is shut off from it, like a goldfish circling his globe, looking through walls he cannot pass. But the most jeopardizing feature, is the effect on the church itself. Free thinking becomes non-existent, and creative minds find no pasture for grazing.

I do not espouse heresy, but I do say that the bridled mind is never apt to inherit the dynamic energy needed to jump the track of conventional ruts. It is inconceivable that any strong, original mind, beset with life's deepest problems, is content to accept the moss-covered opinions of another race or another century.

Separation is not advocated for the mind that cannot accept the whole creed of his brethren. Stay in your church unless conscience compels another course. The men who are constantly searching for more light are the very men most needed in any congregation. The dormant, satisfied minds are the ones they can spare. If the really progressive men and women leave the church, what can save it from decay?

It was the Huguenots, expelled from France, who fertilized the rest of Europe with religious thought. The heretical Pilgrims brought the seeds of religious freedom to America. Spain suffers today because her politicians insisted on extirpating men who bounced upon the scene with original counsel. Scotland by its impregnable orthodoxy drove Carlyle's prophecy to other peoples, just as the Anglican church earlier obliged John Wesley to leave its temples for the green fields. Must our controversies be carried over land and sea,

and from generation to generation, embalmed in our institutions forever?

Some of our men, in order to be immune from the contamination of the church and its faults, have set themselves up as independents. They remain aloof from the forces of religion, and drink deeply from the cup of their personal philosophy. They vindicate their isolation from the church on the same grounds as a Supreme Court Justice who shuns the political arena of partisanship. Such actions, are neither wise nor helpful to the whole. It puts the spectator of life's great game above the brave men who plunge in and try to master it. A solitary thinker must share his thought, just as a single live coal, becomes a component part of the entire bed of coals. Such a man loses more than fervor; he loses fellowship and sympathy for fellowman.

How then, shall these disjointed, disassociated units of churches—large and small, rich and poor, liberal and conservative—survive the trend of the times, and present a united front? How shall they lift up a voice when a voice needs to be heard? How shall they see alike, yet reserve the prerogative of freedom in thought? What force may they employ to draft their forces under one banner? How shall they move as one man, and present a concerted pressure when pressure is needed to be felt? Is there any one thing on which all may agree? Is unity a pipedream, a mere fantasy, or can it in essence become a reality? How shall these 65,000,000 church members pause long enough to look out from their 248,000 church windows and smile together, view needs together, overcome together, work together, be a force together? In the pages of the concluding chapter, the author humbly sets forth, a few suggestions under the caption, "Prognosis," which medically means, "the future of a case." It is not believed by the writer, that all churches will immediately denounce their bigotry, release their ecclesiastical captive, and come running to their brethren of other denomina-

nations with outstretched hands; but he does hope that the thoughts set forth may serve as a windshield wiper to the misted window which has become clouded with prejudice, independence, and deleterious vapors. Perhaps, when the mists are wiped away, we shall see that the form of that hazy stranger, is in reality, our brother.

“PROGNOSIS”

“An itch of disputing will prove the scab of churches.”—Sir Henry Wotton.

“When a building is about to fall down all the mice desert it.”—Pliny The Elder.

OUR patient, the church, is sitting in the waiting room. He has returned to learn his fate. The news that we bring him now from the consultation room, based on our most rigid diagnosis, will determine what is to become of him. Perhaps it will go better with him, if we appear more hopeful ourselves, as we sit down and analyze his case. Many doctors, by wearing masks of terror, devoid of hope, literally scare patients into maladies they never had. So let us reflect only the brightest optimism, as we reveal our findings to our anxious patient.

“Mr. Church, we don’t want to frighten you, but you are a very sick man. Now, before you begin feeling too discouraged, let us say that your case is not a hopeless one. It is true, you have developed a complex, and your face tells us that you have endured much; but it isn’t quite as bad as it appears. In looking over your case record, we have noticed that your whole life has been a stormy one. You must remember that when you were born, people shook their heads, and predicted you wouldn’t live. But, by some divine power, you not only survived, but you thrived. You have had hosts of friends, Mr. Church—friends who gave their lives for you. They loved you dearly, and died that you might live.”

“Yes, you have seen many battles in your time, and I guess you know better than we, that in most of them, you have been the bone of contention. It seems difficult to understand how you, a peaceful soul, ever became embroiled in those

hostilities. Yes, we know, some of those skirmishes were unavoidable. It was also unfortunate that a few unscrupulous people used your name in their own wars. You have been accused of having committed far more things than you deserve. But you must admit, you have been negligent at times. The diagnosis shows that you have used your house for too many secular purposes. Those orgies of self-indulgence are just now producing telling effects. Moreover, for a long time, you had a chronic case of amnesia. You seemed to forget your inheritance, the people who kept you alive, your mission in the world, and your duty to the people who looked to you for help."

"Many times, those helpless people looked to you for words of advice. They futilely awaited help that never came. You cannot blame them too much, for they suffered many things, waiting for you to lift a voice in their defense; but you didn't. Another fault of yours also is just now leaving its scars—your habit of controversy. You'll have to acknowledge that you haven't been a very congenial neighbor. You have wasted a lot of energy by disputing with those who came to help you. They offered a helping hand, and you declined. Yet, all that time, you were in dire need yourself."

"Then, too, you have been inconsistent. You have changed colors oftener than a chameleon. It is little wonder, you haven't gained any new friends. They never find you twice the same. You have moreover, been friendly with a gang of false prophets. You have allowed them to live in your quarters, and use your house to ply their trades. Those associates haven't helped your health any. Your disposition has undergone a tremendous change, too. You used to be brotherly, friendly, kindly disposed to all people; but now you have somehow acquired a sour attitude towards many things. You have gotten to the place where you don't care what happens to other people. Even right at home, people are starving for the bread of life, and you sit serenely in your

comfortable chair before the fire, while they look in through the window. You weren't that complacent in other years."

"Oh, yes, there are a few other things, Mr. Church. You ought to quit feeding on those cheap periodicals and racy literature. There is a book called 'The Bible' that you ought to re-read. You used to relish its words, but somehow you have lost your appetite for it."

"I could also give you a scientific name for another bad habit of yours; but I won't. It's simpler to plainly tell you that you are lazy. You needn't be perplexed by those aching limbs and those 'tired feelings.' The truth of the matter is, you haven't really worked for so long, you have lost the desire. When St. Paul was with you, he made you step. He established you everywhere he went. Have you forgotten him?"

"I want to tell you a little story, Mr. Church, before I send you home to take these prescriptions: 'A stranger was once browsing through a little cemetery after a funeral, and chanced to see an old sexton digging a grave. The old man was well along in years, and not in the best of health. It was hard for him to do manual labor, but he made the best of it, and seemed contented as he labored. It was a rather damp day, and the old man's cough wasn't helped any by the disagreeable weather. The stranger, who had been watching him dig for several minutes, finally broke the silence, and said: "Old man, I'd sure hate to have that cough of yours." The venerable sexton looked up, rested on his shovel, and wiping his brow, said: "Listen, buddy, there are hundreds of people buried right here that would be glad to have my cough".' So you see, you aren't nearly as bad off as you might be. In a sense, you too, have a bad cough, but by taking care of yourself, by living the life prescribed for you, you can be your old self again."

"There is a tonic called 'Love' that you must take every day. There is another medicine called 'Faith' that you must

add to your diet. In addition, you must begin all over by making friends, by helping people meet the problems of life, by exercising your talents, by returning to the humble path of prayer and devotion, and by burning those faulty doctrines that have crept into your library. You can be a new being in a few years, if you want to be. Remember that you have a message which nobody else can give. If anything happens to you, it may never reach the people who need it. Now go back to your labors. Live a good life, be regular, consistent, sacrificial, and above all, live true to the Master who gave you life. Preach His message to unregenerate people. Be the friend to mankind that He was. Be big enough to overlook creed, color, and race. Reach down into the souls of men and seek out that spark of divinity which God put there. Blessings on you, Mr. Church, and may longevity, peace, and power be yours."

There he goes—the church—back to the old stand, but we trust it will be to a new life. All of you must help him. He isn't a well man yet, by any means. It is too early to predict whether the prescriptions we gave him, will restore his health. But of one thing we can be sure, if you whose hands have the capacity of ministry, will tenderly care for him, and uphold him during these coming days of recuperation, he can be nursed back to the healthy, fine being he once was. His life is as much in your hands as his own. So now, having outlined a recovery schedule for our patient, we are also going to leave you with a set of suggestions. If you really love him as much as you say, you will do what you can to regain his lost sovereignty.

Those of you who wear various labels and badges which you call denominations, listen to our Lord: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." That is to say, whosoever lives for what God lives for; whosoever cherishes the will of God as manifest through Christ—whatever his organiza-

tion or formula may be—is in the Christian fellowship, and is in eternal relation to Christ and all who belong to Him.

Why are we so blind in fellowship, yet so all-seeing when faults are detected? In our hymnbooks we join one another's fellowship, whether we are aware of it or not. The Anglican priest conducts worship services, using the hymns of Charles Wesley just as freely as the Methodist minister sings those of Bishop Ken. The Baptist sings "Nearer My God, to Thee," and "In the Cross of Christ I Glory," both having been written by English Unitarians. The Unitarian in turn, enjoys the beautiful hymn "He Leadeth Me," which was conceived by a Baptist teacher. Quaker and Presbyterian alike are grateful for "Lead, Kindly Light," regardless of the fact that the poem was one of the first utterances of Newman after breaking with the Protestant Church.

When people begin to sing, they are drawn together in one unity, one faith, and one spirit, just as "The Star-Spangled Banner" draws Americans into one patriotic body, irrespective of the Latin, German, Hebrew, Negro, Nordic, or Balkan descent of the people under that flag.

Just as in the New Testament we have three different aspects of the truth—the Pauline, the Petrine, and the Johannine—with Peter even affirming that in the writings of "our beloved brother Paul" are "some things hard to be understood," so in our Christian hymnology, we enjoy unity without dissension, despite the variety of the sources. In the same manner "The Lord's Prayer" has been a long-standing unifier for all branches of religious denominations. Do not Our Lord's words apply to us all, whether Lutheran or United Brethren?

Is there no way then, in which those who sing together and pray together, may also work together and glorify Christ together? I think there is. Most of the bigger branches of the church today are growing impatient of working against barriers that have kept asunder what God hath

joined together. They are wearying of exhausting their strength in keeping their fences in repair. Reasons cannot be ascribed to all the separations of the past, but greater reasons can be given for cooperation now. We are coming together, not because one church has out-argued another, not because we have answered all the objections that intolerance has raised; but for the reason that such arguments and objections have proven unprofitable and beside the point.

The nostalgic longing for unity has not come because we are beginning to agree intellectually; nor does it spring from growing indifference to religion. It springs now, from sheer necessity. Bigotry has not been convicted of its crime, but it is being starved out. The churches that will not recognize their brethren, are being left behind, as object lessons in what buzzards will do to those who die alone on the desert. If the church is to rise once again with a united voice, and with regained leadership in the modern world, to speak again with a commanding voice in ethics, philanthropy, education, and government, it must recognize this new spiritual impulse of brotherhood as divinely sent. It must, without surrendering truth, open its doors as widely as Christ opened the doors of his discipleship, and seek to make the church of God co-extensive with the Kingdom of God. Those who belong to Christ in common allegiance, belong in common fellowship, and whatever theory denies this fact, must soon give way. We who cherish the purpose of God revealed through Christ, are brother and sister, and ought to be both visibly and publicly joined in Christian fellowship. We cannot call Christ "Lord" and treat any member of His family as one outside the circle.

It is not necessary that a mission preacher pray like Doctor Fosdick. That would be as futile as forcing a cathedral to use the bass drum of the Salvation Army. The sermons of Horace Bushnell would have been useless to the early cir-

cuit riders of Methodism, as completely so, as a Latin prayer book to a southern Negro minister.

Paul gives us the nail upon which we can hang the coat of this world-wide brotherhood in Romans 8:9—"Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." In that simple, inescapable statement, we have the gist of Christianity. Purely given in but fifteen words—all but one of which is a monosyllable—it tells the story without even sending us to the dictionary. There are axioms in religion as well as in geometry, and what Paul said was one of them. It does not have to be proven—it was true from the start. Too often, our controversies begin and end with the words of Christ. They are indeed wonderful, simple to repeat, and eternal. But repeating is not possessing. Many a man can quote John 3:16 without believing it. Hundreds of people can mutter the Apostles' Creed without subscribing to it. Many people repeat The Lord's Prayer, and that is as far as it goes with them. Anyone can quote what Adolf Hitler said in his latest speech; but not everybody believes what he said. Quoting and believing are two entirely different things. A man may be baptized, participate at the Sacrament of The Lord's Supper, even be married in a church by a minister, yet live in violation to every one of those sacred sacraments.

In essence Paul says, "Though I speak with tongues of men and angels; though I have all the mysteries and all knowledge; though I have all faith, even to remove mountains; though I feed the poor—yet HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, I AM NONE OF HIS."

It will not be an easy task to bring the "spirit of Christ" into the hearts of mankind. It will mean concessions and compromises. "You must lose the fly to catch a trout." Nothing worth-while is ever accomplished without paying a price. We do not suggest compromise on essentials; that would be folly. But in non-essentials and dogmas which in themselves are more conventional than salvational, all of us will be

obliged to yield a little. In this new program of brotherhood, we must be careful lest it be reduced into a general mush of sentimentalism. The surrendering of vital truth is ruinous and unwholesome. That is not Christ's plan. In all things, we must be as "narrow as the truth, and as broad as the need." The brotherhood of Christians must not be misconstrued as a policy of good nature. It is far from that. Nor is it just another "good neighbor" scheme. There must be, underneath, regeneration in the hearts of all, or else they cannot possess the "spirit of Christ." We must not propose to tell mankind in what manner he shall find God—whether it be in tears, joy, contrition, deep emotion—but we must exhort all peoples to find God, howsoever they choose to do it.

But, despite all the dangers that jeopardize us from past and future, this new ideal of fellowship must steadily rise and flood the sky with its light. There must be something more than mere federation. There must be oneness in the actual service of humanity, in the purlieus of cities, in the farmhouses of the countryside, in the care of the blind and sick, in the protection of womanhood and childhood. Our program must be big enough to attempt tasks in reform and philanthropy which no one denomination could dare undertake. It must be felt in the permeation of every land with a new concept of brotherhood, a new pursuit of justice, the outlawing of war, the defense of the weak and oppressed. It will not be another "ism" but a way of life.

Not so long ago, a newspaper story related a miracle from the pages of modern surgery. An elderly man, lying in a hospital in one of our Southern states, was told that at best, he had but six months to live. It so happened that the weary pilgrim chanced to read of the plight of a young man who had lost an eye in an explosion. The venerable old fellow, feeling the desire to be of some good in the world, inquired whether it would be possible for him to donate one of his eyes to the hapless young fellow who had lost his. When

told that such transposition was surgically possible, he submitted to the proposition, in the hope that through one of his eyes, this young man could still view the world about him. It was a sort of a living memorial from the dead. The miracle of surgery perfected the noble altruism of the old man, who since has "wrapped the drapery of his couch about him," and taken his place with eternity's immortal. It was a magnanimous deed in this selfish world, and will long be remembered.

The thought of the old man's "miracle gift" aroused within me a thought which I want to use as a parting word in this volume. If, through the magic of surgical science, two men shall have passed through life, having beheld the world with the same sight, is it too impossible to believe that the Divine Surgeon will one day enable this world's tangled churches to also see through the same eyes? It is just a humble thought, but to my mind, is something "devoutly to be wished."

Yes, the church is still an institution, and may God prevent its ever becoming a destitution. Christ has called us "The light of the world," and "The salt of the earth." God forbid that we fail Him in this greatest crisis of all—this present era.

"*Nihil est quod Deus efficere non possit.*" Cicero.

(There is nothing which God cannot do.)



